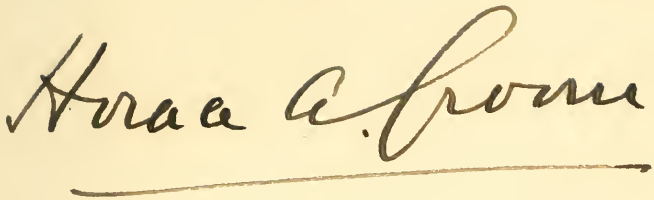

Charles

CHARLES

(LIEUT.-COLONEL C. H. BLACKBURNE, D.S.O.
5th DRAGOON GUARDS)

A MEMOIR

BY HIS BROTHER

LIONEL E. BLACKBURNE

WITH A FOREWORD BY
FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT FRENCH
K.P., G.C.B., ETC. ETC.

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TO MY MOTHER

PREFACE

If any excuse is needed for writing this memoir of my brother, it must be sought in the repeated requests which have been made for it by his many friends and relatives. But I should in any case have written something about him, for his was a character so noble, and his life-story was so typical of what is best worth preserving in the life of the nation, that I should wish my children to have a record of it to which they can turn, in after life, for inspiration and example. If what I write will in any way contribute to make them like the subject of this memoir, brave, upright, happy and loyal members of the great Nation to which we belong, I shall be amply rewarded. But indeed I look for no reward of this or of any other kind in writing this memoir. The task I have set myself is a labour of love. For many years my brother has been to me my ideal of perfect manhood, and I loved and honoured him as not many men are loved and honoured. It is, therefore, no hardship, but a great joy, to try to set down in writing, as best I can, the story of his life. My only fear is that I shall fail to give a worthy account of him.

I shall try to tell a very simple and straightforward story. If it should fall into the hands of any who did not know Charles, it may seem to be a very partial and one-sided story. A great love often blinds the eyes to faults of character and disposition, and it may well be that I shall appear to tell about one who was apparently without fault. If this comment is made, I should like to meet it at once by reminding the reader that brothers are not usually the mildest critics of each other. If a man seemed to be well-nigh faultless to the members of his own family, if the intimacies of home life, if the close companionship of early manhood, such as he and I enjoyed, revealed to me no serious defects in his character, then it is probable that the estimate made of Charles in these pages is not far from being the true one. At any rate I have tried to write honestly. I have borne in mind Carlyle's strictures, "How delicate, decent, is English Biography, bless its mealy mouth!" I can at least say, that if I were aware of grave faults or serious failings in my brother's character, I should speak about them, or rather, there would have been no occasion for this memoir.

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My acquaintance with the distinguished soldier who is the subject of these memoirs was of comparatively recent date.

I think it commenced in the year 1916 shortly after the Dublin Rebellion. At that time my duties as Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces often required my presence in Ireland.

It was during one of these visits that I met Colonel Blackburne, then serving on the Staff of Sir John Maxwell.

My first impression of him was that of a man who was quite familiar with physical danger and had often faced it, a man who was accustomed to keep perfectly calm and collected in the midst of the most turbulent and drastic surroundings; a brave, highly intelligent, self-reliant, skilful soldier, who was fully capable to fulfil any rôle which might fall to him, either in command or on the Staff.

My last impression of him is that which I now retain in my mind, and is a complete

fulfilment of my former judgment. I did not glean this impression myself, but from the thrilling accounts which I heard from reliable eye-witnesses.

It is that of a man seriously maimed in body, but with perfect presence of mind, immersed in the stormy waters of the Irish Channel, battling bravely with the elements, whilst he held aloft a little child whose young life he was trying to save, utterly regardless of his own.

Charles Blackburne came into my life and went out of it in the short space of two years, but remained from first to last the same.

The touching tributes which in these pages his friends bring to his memory all strike the same note as to his extraordinary nature. He possessed the true spirit of a born leader of men, and it is curious to observe in this short but eloquent epitome of his life how his soldier's soul was drawn to the sound of the guns, first in South Africa and again in France, although he had never taken up the army as a profession.

That part of his life with which I was connected is well and accurately portrayed

in the following pages, and I can add nothing to the eloquent words of his brother except to corroborate every one of them to the full.

Those who were brought into close contact with him must have a clear perception of the views regarding life now and hereafter which his touching letters to relatives and friends reveal in him, and to those, his nearest and dearest, who mourn his loss it must bring comfort to know that as he passed through "the Valley of the Shadow," hand in hand with his beloved children, he held fast to the high and noble faith which assures them of his eternal watch over the beloved ones he leaves behind.

Over their graves we may truly breathe those beautiful words of the Latin poet, which have doubtless brought much comfort to the thousands who have suffered the agonies of separation in the past five years—"Those whom the gods love die young."

FRENCH

Viceregal Lodge
Dublin, 15*th September* 1919

CHARLES

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS

Charles was born on May 20, 1876. His father, Charles Edward Blackburne, was the third son of John George Lees Blackburne of Dryclough, near Oldham, who was a civil engineer of considerable note in his time. Our more remote ancestors were, on both sides, merchants or professional men, of whom I may say, as Sir Samuel Romilly said of his own, "if I had the inclination I have not the means of speaking of many of them." It was an honourable stock of worthy and able men, but I do not know of any particular eminence to which any of them attained.

Charles was but a baby eighteen months old when his father died. He had gone to Hastings in the hope of recovering his health, there he died at the early age of thirty-two. Charles' mother is a daughter of the late John Riley of Oldham in Lancashire, who was a well-known and much respected mill-

owner in that locality. She decided to make a home for her children at Hastings, and there we lived, or rather there she lived, and there was our home from our infancy. Thanks to the health-giving climate of this place and to the robust constitution we inherited from her, the congenital delicacy which had proved to be so fatal to the generation preceding our own was overcome. I should state, perhaps, that we were four brothers, there was about eighteen months difference in age between us respectively. John, the eldest, being only four and a half years older than Harry, the youngest. We were thus of a companionable age in our boyhood, and, perhaps for this reason, we were, through life, comrades and friends of each other, as well as brothers. My mother married again in 1881, and my stepfather, William Shadforth Boger, was in every respect a second father to us. My sister was born in 1885.

That was our family circle, and I can safely say a happier family never existed. We were most united, had the jolliest of homes, the best of parents, and for a long period we had no visit from the angel of death. The first break in the circle was when my stepfather

died in 1909. The next in 1915, when Jack was killed in Gallipoli. (He had entered the army from Sandhurst in 1892, serving in the 1st Sherwood Foresters; he was Major and second in command of the 9th Sherwood Foresters when he was killed.)

Charles, I believe, was not a good baby. I am told he was not a fretful child; that could hardly be, for he was, from his infancy, healthy and strong and big. But he was restless and full of mischief. His was always an inquiring mind, and he set about discovering things at an early age. For example, he wanted one day to discover if the key used to wind up a clockwork mouse was a good thing to eat, and so of course he swallowed it, much to the consternation of nurses. Then, when he possessed them, he was anxious to know all about his teeth, and so he proceeded to pull them out in order to look at them. His dental exploits continued for some years, for his first second tooth he uprooted one night with the aid of a buttonhook and penholder, and he was considerably surprised and pained that the discovery of a tooth with a long root, a novel thing to him, proudly displayed at the breakfast-table the following morning, did not meet with an

enthusiastic reception. He was a restless child, and never sat still for many minutes at a time, but he was good-tempered and very generous, and his open and frank nature made those who were momentarily most annoyed by his ceaseless activity, readily forget their annoyance. Books did not appeal to him. Soon after he learnt to read he was presented with a copy of the "Swiss Family Robinson." Charles slowly, and with many excursions away from the written page, read through the volume. He liked the story, for was it not all about animals! and they were objects worthy enough of a boy's consideration; but reading was a laborious task, and it took so long to get through the book that when at last it was finished, the beginning of it was forgotten. But a happy thought occurred to Charles. It could, after all, be read again, and this was assiduously done. How many times that precious volume was read through who can say? It used to be a family joke, for several years, that it was the only book he had read through.

Then there were his toys. They were all of one kind, viz.: horses. As a very little fellow an old wooden horse used to be his

cot companion every night, and all his toys were horses of one kind or another. One day a wonderful present came from a rich uncle, a most expensive and beautiful pair of toy horses, with complete harness to take off. Charles was in the seventh heaven of delight, but soon that inveterate spirit of inquiry manifested itself. The horses had real skin, that was obvious ; but what had they inside ? That was a weighty problem. At last the desire to make sure could be controlled no longer ; the penknife did its ruthless work, and sawdust poured out, much to Charles' grief, for his gallant horses were now mere bags of hide. Doubtless he learnt his first lesson then that inquisitiveness must not be pushed too far.

His generous nature as a boy, and his sympathy for the afflicted are displayed in some of his childish accounts which have come to light, in which such entries as " Blind man one penny " frequently appeared, and showed how Charles spent a large portion of his pocket-money.

As he grew older Charles tired of mere toys. He felt he must own *living* animals, so he got some guinea pigs. These uninspiring beasts were a source of constant delight

to him, until one day a mother guinea pig trampled on her litter of young ones and killed them all. Such heartless conduct was too much for his tender heart, and the guinea pigs were disposed of. But now he was old enough to have a dog, and from the day on which he became the proud owner of "Fly" —a long-legged fox-terrier—to the end of his life he was never without dogs.

Yet horses were his great passion. Soon after the death of my father financial losses had made it necessary for my mother to put down her carriage, and the pony we used to love as children also was sent away; but an annual visit was made to an uncle, who always had the best of hackneys in his stable. When there, nothing short of force could drag Charles from the stable-yard, and when old enough his uncle's coachman gave him his first lessons in riding. This coachman, an old and faithful servant, was an excellent horseman and horse keeper, and Charles often used to tell me how much he had picked up from him in those early years. And the uncle was a great judge of horses; he gave Charles his first lessons in "the points" of a good horse, lessons which he never forgot and which helped to make him second to none

in his judgment. He had a wonderful "eye for a horse," and he often used to say it was his uncle who first taught him what to look for in them, and how to look.

The Christmas holidays were always eagerly anticipated and enjoyed by Charles. He was in his element at children's parties. All through his life his perfect naturalness and entire absence of affectation constituted his greatest charm, and, never being afflicted with self-consciousness, he was never shy or awkward, and he never put on "side," which is usually a form of nervousness. Thus among the boys and girls of St Leonards and Hastings, as well as with the kind hosts and hostesses who provided the parties, Charles was first favourite. There was no hanging back or diffidence with him; I need hardly say there was, on the other hand, no obtrusiveness or self-assertiveness. He thoroughly enjoyed himself, and so he made others happy by his own infectious happiness.

Charles had "no use" for school. His was a very happy life all through, but undoubtedly his least happy time was when he was at school.

As I have said already, he had no natural inclination for book-learning and the drudgery

of the Latin and Greek Grammar was well-nigh intolerable to him. The traditional lines of so-called education in our English private and public schools have often been called into question. I do not propose to enter upon a discussion of the subject in these pages. I will content myself with making the remark that it is extraordinary how many men have proved themselves to be, in after life, wise, able, intelligent, and have achieved to a very great success, who at school were reckoned to be dull and backward by their schoolmasters. "None but dry-headed and calculating, angular little gentlemen can take much delight in $A + \sqrt{B}$, etc." So wrote Alfred Tennyson when at Cambridge. Charles, though his natural affinities were very different from those of the great Victorian poet, would have heartily endorsed that saying. For "lessons" he had the greatest horror. Yet his achievements in later life proved that he had, and must always have had, a wonderfully quick and receptive brain, a retentive memory where his interest was engaged, and a quite remarkable power of rapidly acquiring knowledge which he saw to have a practical bearing upon his life or prospects. I do not know if modern schools cater for boys of

his natural genius, I hope they do, for I am certain that if Charles could have been delivered from the dry and dull work of Grammar and Syntax; if he could have been taught Natural History or Natural Science; if, in a word, the school curriculum had been more elastic and less pedantic, he would have greatly benefited by his school days. For Charles had a great respect for learning, and he was a bright and clever lad. But, as things were then, he by no means distinguished himself at school.

He went, with his brothers, to Upper St Leonards School when ten years old, and, on reaching the age of fourteen, in the year 1890, he left this excellent private school and went to Tonbridge. There he never rose higher than the fifth form, but his character was such that he was made a præposter when in that form, contrary to the ordinary usage of the school. It is greatly to the credit of his House master, Rev. A. Lucas, that he was given this position of authority. He was obviously a natural leader, and as clearly his influence was on the side of what was good. He once got a prize, what it was for I know not. His mother and his eldest brother, then in the sixth form at Charterhouse, went

to the Skinner's Day celebration at Tonbridge. On looking over the List of Prize-winners, his brother said, "Why, there must be two C. Blackburne's at Tonbridge," for there was the name. To the surprise of all Charles, in due course, stepped out to receive his award.

Thus Charles was in early years no great scholar, but he found his rightful place in the games and in the social life of his school. He never was much of a cricketer, the game was not exciting enough for him. He had a good "eye"—in later life he became a first-rate shot—but he could not resist the temptation to "swipe," and so, after one or two mighty blows, his innings usually came to an end and he speedily returned to the pavilion, where he was always heartily and uproariously welcomed. He was a good runner, however, and won both the Junior and Senior half-mile races at the School Sports. He was also a useful three-quarter back, and got his 1st XV colours.

So much then for school days. Apart from the development of character and the making of the man, they did but little for Charles. He was very conscious of this fact himself, and was anxious to escape the tutelage and

"seek fresh woods and pastures new." At length his parents agreed to his leaving school, and in 1893, when he was seventeen and a half years old, he left Tonbridge.

I must now hark back somewhat, for I have got a little too far ahead with my story. I have said that Charles' great interest was with animals. He soon added ferrets to his menagerie. Not many people make pets of these fierce and odoriferous little beasts, but Charles did so. They were kept with the greatest care, and were trained to perfection.

Perhaps some of the happiest of his boyhood's days were spent in Cheshire. An old coachman of my father's had taken a small farmstead there after we had given up a house we had in Birleydam, and Charles and I used to go summer by summer to spend some glorious weeks in the heart of that beautiful country. Charles was in his element here. There was a pony on the farm, it was a rough and shaggy beast, yet year by year great astonishment was caused among the natives by its sudden smart appearance. Charles was the cause of this astonishment, for he became its self-appointed groom, and hours were spent, clippers and curry comb in hand, upon the intractable hide of that

long-suffering beast. Then, too, there were the ponies of the neighbouring farmers. Charles begged to be allowed to ride them. Permission was readily given, and he soon blossomed out as a complete horseman. A trooper in his squadron said to me, during the first year of the Great War, "the Captain is a wonderful horseman." That was high praise from a man who had been trained in the 5th Dragoon Guards under Colonel Ansell, who had made his regiment as perfect in horsemanship as it was possible to make it. Yet the praise was merited, and the reason for his "wonderful horsemanship" must be, in large part, sought in these early rough-and-tumble experiences with the Cheshire farmers' wild Welsh ponies.

These were happy holidays indeed. My brother and I were entirely our own masters. We did as we liked. Sometimes, ancient muzzle-loading gun in hand, we set out in pursuit of rabbits. Sometimes we went for day-long fishing expeditions on the Combermere. Sometimes to flower shows and other village festivities. Days were spent on the farms with the farmers and their men. It must have been something of a risk to let two high-spirited boys go so far away from

their home and from parental control. We were only fifteen and thirteen and a half years old respectively when we made the first of these temporary sojourns in Cheshire —but our parents knew we could be trusted, and there were friends in the neighbourhood who gave an eye to us, and I do not think we learnt anything harmful, while, on the other hand, I am certain we gained much by these early tastes of absolute freedom. Charles especially profited by them. He learnt then that independence, self-reliance and resourcefulness which were so often in after life to stand him and others in such good stead. I remember a good old farmer saying to me one day, "Your brother will get on in the world and make his mark," and when I asked him why, I was told, "Because he is always asking intelligent questions."

Another happy time in Charles' boyhood was when he and I were given our first guns. Long before we were allowed to shoot we had become adepts in the art of ferreting. We had been singularly fortunate for boys brought up in a town. A cousin of ours had come to live on the outskirts of Hastings, and to him it is due that we at an early age were taught the mysteries of woods and fields and hedge-

rows. My cousin had been a great sportsman and though, at this time, in failing health and not able to take us out himself, yet his valet, who was himself a keen sportsman, was directed to do so. When our cousin gave up his shoot we received permission to go out whenever we wished with the head keeper of the Coghurst property.

At that time this beautiful estate was rented by Mr Coghill, and he was good enough to encourage us in our love of sport. Many were the happy days we spent with his head keeper, Mewitt by name, who gave us never-to-be-forgotten lessons in game lore. Charles was an apt pupil, and probably no man had a better knowledge than he rapidly acquired of the habits of the wild birds and ground game of England. We were constantly out with our kind old friend the keeper, and he taught us how to set traps for vermin, where to look for woodcock or snipe, how to train spaniels and retrievers. And when, at last we received, one glorious Christmas Day, a gun apiece, he taught us how to handle and use them.

I may not dwell at any greater length on this period of my brother's life, much as I should wish to do so, for these are happy

memories indeed. I hope I have succeeded in showing Charles as he was when a boy. He was always the same, even-tempered, cheery, full of life and very affectionate. He was first favourite with all who came in contact with him, for he was so natural and intelligent and full of vitality—a nature's child. He loved his home, his games, his animals. His too was not a fickle nature. When once he gave anyone a place in his affections or regard he never varied, but remained, through life, constant to them. He married, as I shall relate, the girl who had been his playmate and the object of his affections from his earliest boyhood. New friends—and he made new friends every year of his life—never ousted the old ones from his mind. And to friends in humble station he was equally true. Taylor, his father's old coachman; Wade, his first tutor in horsemanship; Mewitt, the keeper, were never forgotten, and he often used to express to me his gratitude to them for all he had learnt from them in his happy boyhood.

CHAPTER II

EARLY MANHOOD

When Charles was growing to manhood the daily papers gave considerable space to the discussion of the perennial question, "What are we to do with our boys?" This was certainly a vexed point so far as Charles was concerned. The way to the Army or the professions was barred to him by the necessary examinations. As I have said, he was no fool. Indeed, he was singularly quick and mentally alert, but he could not bring himself to the steady acquisition of "book learning." His two older brothers were destined for the Army, and this profession would have suited Charles, especially the Indian Army, but the ease with which his eldest brother passed into Sandhurst from Charterhouse could not be accomplished by him. His natural bent suggested farming, and while his future was still in suspense, it so happened that I broke down in health and had to relinquish my hope of going to Sandhurst, and was ordered by

Dr Symes Thompson to live an open-air life in the country. This led our parents to come to a decision as to Charles' future, and he and I became "Mud students."

Then began that close daily companionship for three years, which is one of the happiest memories of my life.

We first took up our abode on a large farm near Penshurst in Kent. We were not particularly well suited there. The type of farming in Kent was not that which we wished to learn, and after nine months we migrated to Norfolk. There, on the great Norfolk farms of Pensthorpe and Warham, we were happy enough.

Charles quickly gained an insight into the art of good farming and found a great interest in it; but his love for horses remained his dominant passion, and in Norfolk he had abundant opportunity for indulging it. He quickly became the complete horse-breaker. No youngster was too wild for him, no "rogue" too confirmed in bad habits for him to tackle. His love for the animals, his long, untiring patience, his fearless courage, his strength of body and his perfect "hands" enabled him to subdue the most intractable of beasts. Perhaps to these early horse-

breaking experiences is due, as much as to anything else, the development of that character, at once so strong and so gentle which endeared him to all who knew him. His patience was wonderful. I remember going out one morning and finding him on the back of a confirmed "jibber." Over and over again was the brute brought up to a certain place in the road, and over and over again he refused to pass it. Most men would have quickly lost their temper. Not so Charles. I left him about ten o'clock, hard at it. On my return for lunch he was still there, patient and persistent. After lunch I went out, and still the contest of wills was going on, and it was not until the late afternoon, after a struggle of five or six hours' duration, that Charles won, and the horse gave in. There seemed to be some subtle understanding between him and horses, and I do not doubt there was. I remember his victory over a beautiful hackney mare which, thanks to Charles, won many prizes afterwards in the show ring. She was fiery and vicious, most uncertain in temper, and possessed of most of the bad habits of the stable. She would bite and kick any stranger who came into her box, and woe betide the unwary horse-

man who should presume to ride her. But with him she was docility itself, as quiet as the proverbial lamb.

Charles soon became quite famous in the neighbourhood for his horse-breaking exploits, and many of his Norfolk friends were only too glad if he would take their youngsters in hand, and so he was never without a good mount; and, when the unruly youngsters could be sufficiently trusted, he spent long and happy days on them in the hunting-field.

At this time, too, he developed his wonderful gift as a dog trainer. Charles always had a dog which he had trained himself. Spaniels, retrievers, terriers, all quickly learnt from him those things without knowing which no dog is worth his place in the kennel. It may be of interest, and it will certainly prove Charles' abilities in dog training, if I give an instance of what he did. He always trained his dogs to guard anything we left beside them. One day, in early summer, he and I were walking round the farm; two of our dogs were with us, Bob and Nell, spaniel and retriever respectively. We wanted to look at some ewes and lambs, and we left the dogs at a gateway, laying down some of our belongings for them to guard. It so happened that we returned

to the house by another way, and so forgot them. I was playing in a cricket match that day, and Charles drove with me to the ground. After the match we stayed to have dinner with some friends, and returned home about eleven o'clock. We always fed the dogs ourselves, and going out to do this we missed Bob and Nell from among them. (These two were our favourites.) We then remembered where we had left them, and we walked, lantern in hand, across the fields to the gateway. Sure enough there were the faithful beasts, cold and hungry, but they had never moved. How much longer they would have stayed who can tell, but they had been there for over twelve hours. The farm men told us next day how they had tried to coax the dogs back, and to bring into the house the things we had left by them, but they had been driven back with angry growls and white showing teeth. Alas, poor Bob! a better spaniel never lived, none more steady or better trained. A "Winkle" shot him one day by mistake. It was a dismal end for so noble a beast. Charles did not often lose his temper and I very seldom heard him say hard things, but when "Winkle" came up with a silly simper to say he had shot Bob,

he did let out, "Pity you didn't shoot yourself instead, you would not have been missed!" And I think we all said "Amen" to that under our breath.

There are not many things worthy of recording, perhaps, in this period of my brother's life. There was always plenty to do, and the keenest enjoyment was found in the doing of it. Life was good indeed to us. There was plenty of rough shooting and an occasional big day with partridges or pheasants. Charles soon became a first-rate shot. I do not know that there is any special incident worthy of mention in his shooting. He got a lot of it, for he was such a good sportsman and so unselfish that most people who knew him were glad to have him with them. About this time he began to go to Scotland each year to shoot with Mr C. J. Ebden at his place at Newton in Lanarkshire, and there he made friends with people who ever had a high place in his regard as he had in theirs. One of them once said to me, "Charles is, without exception, the best fellow I have ever met." He was always a welcome guest at house parties, for not only was he a good shot, but also he was a constant source of entertainment. He was an excellent amateur

actor, and sang a comic song like a professional and had a happy knack of expressing any matters in quaint phrase and imagery which made his conversation always vivid and alive. In a later chapter I shall have more to relate about Newton. Charles was a great humourist. He could tell a funny story with anyone. Like Abraham Lincoln, he would tell a "broad" story if it was really humorous, and he was a great "raconteur." But he never told a foul story, and he hated hearing anyone do so. I remember being in a crowded railway carriage with him one day on our way to a coursing meeting. One of the company related a particularly gross story, entirely lacking in fun and just beastly. Charles, during its narration, looked at him with a set face and with a cold, hard look in his eyes, a look which very seldom came into them, and only when he was grievously angry at some injustice or wrong-doing. The story ended, and instead of joining in the half-laugh which greeted its conclusion, Charles broke the silence which fell upon the company with, "Then all I can say is you are a damned villain." I thought there would be a fight, and Charles was certainly ready enough for it, but the story-teller must

have read defeat for himself, and the promise of some hard blows from stalwart arms in those steely eyes and that set mouth, for he said nothing and left the carriage soon afterwards.

Before I end this chapter, I should like to mention one thing worth recording, for it is characteristic of the man. His keen interest in animals, and in horses in particular, led Charles to desire to possess some more exact veterinary knowledge than he could pick up from coachmen, stud grooms and farmers. A veterinary surgeon was found who was willing to teach him, and he set to work on books in earnest for the first time in his life. Here was a branch of knowledge really worth striving after, so thought Charles, and he was most persevering and painstaking in his study. Three mornings a week were spent with his instructor. Many were the operations he witnessed and assisted in, and every evening found him engrossed in the study of animal anatomy, or some other branch of veterinary knowledge. He even toiled with his Latin again in order to be able to understand the Pharmacopœia. He met with great success, and though never a qualified veterinary surgeon, he was quite the equal of one

in knowledge and experience. He always doctored his own horses, and he effected some wonderful cures among them. (During the South African War he saved the life of a valuable charger by a timely and very successful operation.) And he gained that exact and scientific knowledge of horses which made him so successful as a buyer of them for the Government in South Africa.

In 1895 I left Charles to go up to Cambridge, and our companionship of over three years came to an end.

Charles then left Warham, where for two years he and I had lived in the house of Mr H. A. Groom, from whom and Mrs Groom we had received the greatest kindness. He settled in Docking. There he tried his hand at chicken farming, but he had no interest in this prosaic means of getting a livelihood, and the venture was quickly given up. He then went to live at Snettisham, where he had a small farm, and went in for horse breeding and breaking.

On December 3rd, 1897, he met with a nasty accident while riding a young horse, and for several months he had to become an involuntary invalid. This brought his time in Norfolk to an end.

On recovering his health he quickly wearied of an idle life. The question then again arose, what was he to do. It was at length decided that he should travel and see something of the world. He elected to begin his wanderings by a visit to Canada, where his stepbrother was living, and on May 12th, 1898, a few days before his twenty-second birthday, he left England and began a life which was to be varied and adventurous enough even for him.

CHAPTER III

CANADA AND THE KLONDYKE

In writing this chapter I have to depend very largely upon Charles' letters for my account of his doings from May 1898 to the end of the following year. He kept a journal during that time, but this has not been discovered among his papers. He often, however, used to describe his experiences to me and, moreover, I have had the advantage of talking with some of those who were his companions in the North-West, and so I am able somewhat to amplify the bare record of places he visited, and things which he did during this period.

He arrived at Montreal at the end of May; having made friends on board he spent a week with them in the neighbourhood of Toronto, then on, via Fort William, to Winnipeg and eventually to Brandon.

Henry Boger and his family were living in the latter place, and with them Charles made a stay for several months. It is char-

A "Bag" from Lake Winnipeg

Charles and Harry Boger

acteristic of him that in a letter describing his journey he says: "Now that the first part of my trip is over I am rather sorry, as I enjoyed the voyage and the journey very much. I was so lucky in meeting such nice people." It never seemed to occur to him that people were mostly "nice" to him. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." So runs the proverb. Charles always had friends, and that because he showed himself friendly.

He was somewhat disappointed with his first impression of Canadian life. "Everyone appears to be a bank clerk," he wrote. But soon he got over these impressions, and quickly discovered that there were plenty of good fellows in the Dominion. He was in great request at concerts, and before long he actually organised and presented a very successful performance of "The Geisha," he taking the part of the Chinaman. He visited a good many towns with his amateur company and was very well received. Then also he made many expeditions to Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba duck shooting. Sometimes Harry Boger, who is a good sportsman, accompanied him, sometimes a friend, sometimes Joe Askinson, so well-known to all Canadian sports-

men. There was also an expedition after elk and moose.

One day when following up a wounded elk he was benighted, and must have fared badly had he not discovered the hut of a French-Canadian. Charles was not a masterly linguist, and history does not relate what the French-Canadian's feelings were when he was greeted with, "*Allons après la cerf!*" nor how he managed to prevail upon Charles to give up the pursuit and to seek a night's shelter in his log hut, in which Charles afterwards declared "there were creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts."

Charles was also in great request as "coachman." He writes, "I am apparently the only man, apart from the livery stable proprietor, who can drive a four-in-hand," and so during the summer of 1898 he saw a good deal of the country and kept his hand in as a "whip"; and a better "coachman" than Charles never lived. He also acted as judge in some flat races in the neighbourhood of Brandon.

Since his landing in Canada he had been seized with the desire to go to the newly-discovered goldfields in Alaska, and most of his letters are full of various plans dealing

with that project. Conflicting accounts of the richness of the goldfield, and the possibility of making a "pile," kept reaching him, and it was difficult for him to make up his mind what to do.

While in suspense, however, the time passed rapidly enough. There were more shooting visits to the lakes and one long expedition into the bush, of which he says, "We had a very rough time. I have at any rate learnt to cook, and cooked every meal we had." On his return from this expedition he found a letter from home, in which he was encouraged to go at least as far as Vancouver.

He remained at Brandon and Winnipeg until the beginning of March, so that he might get his "show" over. The show was a reproduction of "The Geisha" of which he was very proud. He had got together a chorus of fifty voices, a full orchestra and several excellent amateurs for the principal parts, thus showing the beginning of the organising ability of which he was possessed. The Brandon and Winnipeg papers had most eulogistic reports of the performances, and Charles was greatly entertained by a description given of himself as "that well-known and popular London comedian, C. H. Blackburne."

On March 22nd he left Brandon for Victoria. At that place he quickly made new friends and met a man named Moran, to whom he had been introduced by a mutual friend at Brandon, and with whom Charles had intended to go up-country to the goldfields. But unfortunately Moran was taken ill, and Charles was stranded.

His capacity for making friends came to his assistance here, for he soon made the acquaintance of two Englishmen, George and Currie by name, who were going North, and in their company he set out on April 14th. The end of that month showed him at Skagway, where all was made ready for the long pull over the White Pass, and across the ice to Atlin City. He was there by May 7th, and writes : " We have come in over the ice just before it broke up. We bought two dogs, and they pulled the greater part of the stuff and we dragged the rest. We were lucky to get in on the ice as it was fast breaking, and in many places we went through. We were only four days getting in from Skagway. We sleep by day and travel by night, as it thaws during the day. Skagway is about a hundred miles from here, so we did well to make the distance in the time and pulling a load."

He had to stay at Atlin City for some time, since the melting snow made a visit to the creek where Moran's claim was situated impossible, but he was not idle. He writes, "The three of us and another Englishman took a contract to store twenty tons of ice." When this job was finished he was able to get up to the claim of which he was to have had a share.

"After a long tramp with our stuff 'packed' on our backs," he got to the claim, only to find it "jumped." Poor Charles! He was doomed to meet with no good luck in Alaska. This was but the beginning of misfortunes. The last and worst, as I shall presently relate, was in his loss of a copper claim at Cape Nome which was also jumped. The claim, I may mention, was shortly afterwards sold for £70,000. Still he was undeterred by ill-fortune, and determined to get on somehow. He returned to Atlin City and there met Colonel Pearse, who had been in the 1st Sherwood Foresters, and knew Charles' elder brother, who as I have stated, was a subaltern at that time in that regiment. Charles writes as follows: "He has taken me on as bar-keeper and general useful man. I have taken the job, as it may lead to my getting

something else from Pearse's influence. So you can picture me now standing behind the bar and serving out drinks to a crowd of miners."

The hotel at which Charles was barman was on Surprise Lake, and consisted of four large tents. It was evidently a rough place, and this was a rough experience, but there were expeditions after black bear and caribou, which diversified the monotony of it somewhat. Also the "crowd" must have kept him alive. He writes home to say, "Some of the people out here would surprise you, as they are hardly as gentle as lambs."

One thing he could not stand about "the crowd" was the cruel way in which sledge dogs were treated, and he used every endeavour to get protection for these poor beasts, I fear with but little success. His own two dogs, Prince and Charlie, must have realised by contrast what it was to have a good master; and that kindness did not mean the spoiling of a dog is proved by the fact which he proudly relates of how "Charlie and Prince 'pulled' 400 lbs. for us, and moreover on the ice I sat on the load, and so you can see what good dogs they are."

The time at Hotel Victoria, Surprise Lake,

came to a close about the end of June. He had risen to the exalted post of manager. It was not a nice job. He writes, "This is not exactly a place for singing hymns." Such was his guarded description of his customers, and it is not to be wondered at that selling beer at a shilling per glass palled upon him. Still, he was gaining experience and proving himself to be trustworthy and hard-working. I ought to say he only took on this job so that he might be able to assist his two partners. They could get nothing to do, and Charles shared his earnings with them. "They were pretty well broke," Charles wrote. Truly he was a great comrade. Not every man of his position and upbringing would have spent two months behind a bar serving rough and sometimes drunken miners, and keeping order among them, an unpleasant and even a dangerous business, solely to maintain two chance acquaintances who were down on their luck. But this was Charles all through, and his letters from this place are cheering and breathe no word of complaint. He knew he had only to write to the bank to get enough money to take him back, but he had put his hand to the plough and he did not mean to look back until he had got to the end of the furrow.

The middle of July saw him at Dawson City on his way to Cape Nome, where a new "strike" had been reported. He went up with Colonel Pearse. He had saved some £50 at his hotel work, and with this he fitted himself out to face the rigour of this Arctic expedition. In later life a General reported of him, as I shall show later on, that "he did not know what fear was." But this was not a just estimate of Charles' character. He never went into anything foolishly or without calculation. This fact, to my mind, greatly enhanced his courage. He was not one of those men who never scent danger. He was not foolhardy; indeed he had a keen sense of danger and he foresaw hardship, but this having been done, with characteristic deliberation, he nevertheless was undeterred by the prospect, and went cheerfully forward with what he had to do. Surely this is the highest and best type of bravery.

He knew that the expedition to Cape Nome was not a light undertaking. He writes: "I know it is no child's play. It may probably mean being a winter up there in the Arctic circle. Don't think," he adds, "that I have got the gold fever or anything of the kind, but this is no doubt the chance of a lifetime to

make a good bit of money, and it seems worth a year's hardship."

The journey was successfully accomplished, and near the White Horse Rapids he staked out his copper claim, which proved to be so rich afterwards but from which he was never to derive any benefit.

The famous Five-finger Rapids were passed without accident and Dawson City was reached on August 3rd. Three days later he was on his way to Circle City. He was then in charge of a consignment of gold. He writes: "By the way, to give you some idea of the gold of this country, I am sleeping in a cabin with another man who is taking two tons of gold for the banks. He and I are the sole convoy. Not many can say that they have slept for a week over two tons of solid gold."

Gold could not, however, have had much purchasing value in these parts, for he relates how a bed at Dawson City cost £1 a night, beer 10s. a bottle, oranges 1s. each, and a chicken £3. "You may imagine," he says, "I do not want to stay very long there. But," he added, "I am very fit, and weigh over thirteen stone."

Perhaps I may, at this point, try to give a description of my brother. The mention of

his weight has reminded me that I have not yet given any account of his appearance. He was just under six feet in height, very deep-chested, and with those slightly sloping shoulders which all really powerful men have. He always carried himself very erect, and looked you straight in the face with his clear, gray-blue eyes. He had a straight short nose, a sensitive mouth and a very firm and strong chin, which faithfully denoted his resolution of character, and he had brown hair. When he was interested his eyes wore a singularly earnest look, and when he was merry, and that was nearly always, he had the most infectious laugh, and a free and frank air which was most attractive and most revealing. If you were in any way worthy of regard yourself, you saw right into the heart of Charles, and all you saw was solid and good right through. I have been asked by one who has heard much about him what he was like when he was angry, or when he met anyone who was uncongenial to him. He very seldom was really angry. He always hated discussing people, and I never heard him say unkind or malicious things about anyone. He had an extraordinary power of mimicry and of vivid description which was intensely humorous, but his cari-

catures of people, given in his conversation about them, were unlike those of Hogarth, and more, perhaps, like those of Phil May. They were good-natured, and if intensely humorous, never biting. He made you laugh at his description of people, but he provoked from you a good-natured laugh in which there was no scorn or contempt. If he really did not like a man he used to say plainly, "He is a sweep," and that ended the matter so far as he was concerned. If he met anyone who was uncongenial to him, his manner became excessively polite, and his conversation with him was then, and then only, utterly banal. "Very nice, very nice," he would interject into the conversation, obviously not paying the least attention to what was being said. But to all who were of any worth he was glorious—I can but say what I really feel, the best and dearest fellow I ever saw. "Absolutely the whitest man I have ever met," was the comment of one of his brother officers in later life. He always was just that—"a white man." Cruelty, especially to a child or to an animal; deceit or sharp practice; uncleanness and foul talk; caused his ire to rise, and that steely look, which I have already described, to come into his eyes.

Well, I must return to my narrative, though I could go on writing about his appearance and manner for a long time without my pen giving out.

Charles left Dawson City on August 6th. The 12th saw him at Circle City, after having been stranded for three days on a sandbank. He was much interested in seeing the old Hudson Bay Company's posts and forts on the Yukon River. At St Michael's he heard good reports of Cape Nome, which gave him fresh hope of doing well there. (He had been much depressed by the bad reports which he had heard at Dawson City.) He pressed on to Cape Nome, where he arrived at the end of August. There a great disappointment met him. All the claims had been staked out, and there was nothing left for him. It was a bitter blow after his long journey and many hardships. "I have let the season go by," he wrote, "and have not made any money at all. It is a great disappointment."

He set to work, however, on one of the mines, working for wages, 32s. a day and his food. There he remained for two months and worked with a pick and shovel. "It was a pretty rough time" was his simple comment.

By October 25th he was back again at

Victoria, where he got a good rest which was much needed. His first intention was to return to Brandon for the winter, and to go back to Cape Nome in the summer. He had a good idea that the copper claim which he had staked out would prove to be valuable, as indeed it turned out to be. But when he arrived at Victoria he was greeted with the news about the war in South Africa and he determined at once to return to England in order to be in it.

Before he left he rode in and won a steeplechase, viz. the Colwell Cup, on a horse belonging to Fred Wrigley which Charles trained. Then he returned eastward, staying a few days at Brandon to bid good-bye to his many friends there, then on to New York and so home to England.

He landed at Liverpool on December 21st 1899 and joined the family circle, to the great delight of all, in good time for Christmas Day. In my stepfather's diary I read: "December 23rd. Charles arrived home, looking well, after one and a half year's absence in the North-West."

It is pleasant for me to be able to add the following little note by Colonel Clark of the 45th Canadian Batt.:—

"Charlie Blackburne spent some months of 1898 and 1899 at Brandon, Manitoba. He was very popular, and in great demand at concerts and entertainments, his singing and his interpretations of Chevalier's coster songs always making a great hit. He was also instrumental in bringing about a very successful production of the comic opera 'The Geisha,' and in taking the principal part of the Chinaman he was easily 'the star.'"

"The news of Colonel Blackburne's death, and the sudden ending and cutting off of a brilliant and successful career, came as a great shock to his many friends in Western Canada, where he is still affectionately remembered."

CHAPTER IV

SOUTH AFRICAN WAR, 1899–1902

Everybody knows all about the Boer War. If they don't, they can readily turn to the official history of it or to Sir A. Conan Doyle's admirable narrative. I propose in this chapter simply to deal with Charles' share in the campaign.

He arrived home as I have said on December 22nd. He did not waste much time, for on December 28th he was at Gravesend, having decided to enlist in the West Kent Imperial Yeomanry, which was then being formed. My brother Harry was at home from Cambridge, and he decided to go out with Charles to South Africa. The two of them became full privates (or troopers) on December 28th.

The West Kent Yeomanry formed part of the 11th Battalion I.Y. under Lieut-Colonel Firman. Its officers were Captain F. B. Mildmay, M.P., the Hon. F. Mills, Sir Samuel Scott and Mr Bertram Pott (now Lieut-Colonel R. B. Pott).

Charles' knowledge of horses and horsemanship soon led to his promotion to be lance-corporal.

After two months' training the battalion embarked on the White Star Line "Cymric." Charles writes: "We hardly travelled with all the luxury I had on my last trip in a White Star boat, but on the whole we do fairly well and I find a hammock makes a fairly good bed."

In due course they arrived at Cape Town. Harry writes: "I do not know what I should have done without old Charles, he seems to know all the ropes."

While in Maitland Camp at the end of March, Charles heard of the serious illness of his eldest brother in Cape Town. Jack had gone out as Adjutant to the Irish Hunting contingent of the I.Y. under Lord Longford.

Jack's illness was the cause of great anxiety to Charles. He had contracted enteric fever, and it was a great relief when Charles was able to cable home the good news of his recovery. He had obtained leave from his Commanding Officer to remain behind at Cape Town when his battalion was moving up country. His visits to his sick brother brought the lance-corporal into touch with

the officers of the Irish I.Y. How quickly he became popular with them is shown by the fact that Lord Longford asked him if he would accept his brother's commission. This he was naturally anxious to do, but only on the condition that they would take Harry also into the regiment. By this time, however, the 11th Battalion had moved a considerable way up country, taking Harry with them of course, so the project fell through. It was just as well that it did, for three months later the Irish Hunting contingent was entirely captured by the Boers at Lindley, June 1900.

On rejoining his battalion he found plenty of work for him. He writes: "I have been busy riding the 'whalers' which they have sent to us for remounts and breaking in a four-in-hand for the waggon."

April 29th saw the 11th Battalion I.Y. near Bloemfontein, and in the next month it took part in the Battle of Biddulphsburg. Charles writes: "We had to storm a hill with almost straight sides. The pluck of our soldiers is perfectly wonderful. The Scots and Grenadier Guards went into the hottest of the firing smoking pipes and biting straws, just as if they were going partridge shooting. The veldt was on fire in places and many of the wounded

as they fell were dreadfully burnt. I am glad to say that we got special mention for our scouting work."

Charles' regiment was attached to the 8th Division (General Rundle). It was generally known as "The Starving Eighth," as owing to defective transport arrangements, and being a long distance from railways, food was very scarce. The mounted troops fared better than the infantry, for they had opportunities of adding to their rations. Charles writes a laudatory account of Harry as a universal food provider, and describes how he obtained chickens, turkeys, etc., from the Kaffirs.

Charles had done so well in his work as lance-corporal that he was in the month of June advanced to the exalted rank of sergeant. He writes home quite delighted with his promotion. About this time he and twelve men, including Harry, went with Captain Mildmay, to join a force attached to Brabant's Horse. They formed part of General Clement's flying column. On one occasion the advance guard was trapped by the Boers, having been led by a guide into an ambush. "We came butt on them," writes Charles. "The order had come to make for the cover of a small kopje, and I am pleased to say that our twelve

men were the first to be drawn to be in front of our officer. He was very pleased." Charles does not mention, however, the fact that he was the sergeant responsible for this piece of work.

On another occasion he had a great fright. An attack was being made upon some Boers who were in possession. Charles managed to leave Harry with the horses, thinking it would be a safe job, while the dismounted men were storming the kopje. The Boers, however, were able to reach the horses with two of their guns, and shell after shell fell among the huddled mass of five hundred or more terrified animals. There were many casualties. Four men were killed and several wounded, and it is not difficult to imagine the state of poor Charles' feelings as he scaled the kopje, thinking all the time that his brother was among those who were being bombarded. But fortunately Harry escaped unscathed. It must have been an anxious time for Charles so long as Harry was with the regiment: he felt responsible for the safety of the boy. On one occasion, when rushing from rock to rock under fire, he saw Harry suddenly stumble and fall, his rifle flying out of his hand. He naturally thought that he had been hit, and a moment of dreadful fear seized him that he

would have to write home to say that Harry had been killed. Disregarding his own safety behind the rock which was sheltering him, he ran towards the prostrate form of his brother, and when near him had the mingled joy and annoyance of seeing him quickly pick himself up again with a grin and proceed to a place of safety. He had only tripped over a stone. Charles often chaffed Harry about his clumsiness on this occasion, but it must have been a bad few seconds for him.

While with General Clements they took part in some heavy fighting round Bethlehem. Charles describes the capture of that town, and says "the Royal Irish made a splendid charge and took back one of the guns which had been lost at Stormburg."

In July they were present at the surrender of Prinsloo and five thousand Boers.

Then ensued a period of rather dull work. "We are only doing patrol and police work and get no excitement. We are very sick of it." In August he writes: "I still have my same mare Dolly. I have had her from the beginning. She is a wonder, one of the only three which remain from the original lot"—thanks to Charles and his care and skill, but he does not say so.

Charles as Lieut. West Kent Yeomanry, aged 25

The work of the I.Y. was mostly that of forming advance, rear and flank guards to convoys, and also of making reconnaissances. Charles' lot were constantly on the move. Harrismith, Vreda, Bethlehem, Senekal are the places from which his letters came for the most part. When on the trek there was constant sniping, and many a small "scrap," but the chief feature of the work was the incessant marching and the lack of sufficient rest.

In October the division to which he belonged was split up, and various towns were garrisoned by the different brigades. Charles was with General Boyes' brigade at Reitz. "It is deadly dull," he writes. Soon, however, things became more lively. They started on the trek again, and in the Standerton neighbourhood they had fighting each day. November saw him at Standerton itself, and for the first time he entered the place, in the neighbourhood of which he was destined later on to spend five of the most strenuous years of his life. In this month he received his commission. The other officers, the Hon. E. Mills, Sir Samuel Scott, and Bertram Pott gave him a hearty welcome to their mess and Charles writes, "They are such good fellows."

In the following month he heard with great relief that Harry had got his discharge. A break of more than one year in his university life would have been serious for him, and as he had only signed on for one year it was but just to allow him to return. Yet he was fortunate, for the others, who also had only enlisted for a year, had to remain for many more months before they got their discharge.

Charles was offered a commission in the infantry about this time. "But," he said, "I am sure I should hate the infantry, and the cavalry, I fear, would be too expensive for me."

In the month of November there was much "scrapping," and a brother officer tells me that Charles had at this time one very narrow escape. A bullet passed through the crown of his hat and another through his water-bottle. Charles was unconscious of the former of these "close things" until it was pointed out to him.

The same officer writes: "He was a tremendous asset to the squadron, and stood out from the first as an able and efficient officer."

In December Captain Mills returned home,

and Sir Samuel Scott took command of the squadron. This meant that Charles had charge of two troops, and his responsibility increased. "It is not easy to keep the men in good heart," he writes. "We have had ceaseless treks and very long days. We rise to the cheerful reveille at 3 a.m., trek all day and do a good deal of scrapping. But I am very well and have a face like the full moon, the only drawback being that the sun has removed most of its covering and so shaving is a painful business."

By this time many of the men in the squadron who had enlisted for one year's service were naturally becoming anxious to return to their homes and their businesses, and Charles found it by no means easy to keep them always in good fettle. In January 1901 he writes: "The other day we had a good fight. We found the Dutchman in possession of a high kopje with a gun and two Maxims. The mounted troops took the kopje." As the mounted troops consisted largely of Yeomanry, I should like here to put into print the following which appeared in Brigade Orders:

"The Troops on the ridge to-day witnessed with admiration a charge on a position as able

and daring as any soldiers could wish to see. The Major-General Commanding thanks Lieut.-Col. Firman for his gallant lead, and congratulates his Officers, N.C.O.'s and men on their brilliant success."

I venture to print this because the Imperial Yeomanry have scarcely had the justice done to them which they richly deserve. Their critics are not so careful as they should be to distinguish between the first and second drafts of Yeomanry. The first proved themselves to be gallant troops. They were all volunteers, many of them farmers, who enlisted from purely patriotic motives as soon as the country needed their services. To them no inducement of Colonial pay was held out, and this General Order proves how efficient they were in face of the enemy. The second lot were not so good, and fell, doubtless deservedly, into the black books of Lord Kitchener.

In January 1901 Sir Samuel Scott returned home, and Charles writes: "There are now only Pott and myself to look after the squadron. We have had much sickness. The strain and responsibility of going out day after day with only a handful of men and being sniped continually is very great." He bore

the strain, however, all right and received another step in promotion. His Captain writes of him, "No man ever had a better Second-in-command."

At last in February they got a much-needed rest at Ficksburg. Here Charles and his Captain and great friend, Bertram Pott, started an officers' club in an empty house, and having secured a piano, many were the cheerful musical evenings they planned, singing songs and practising for concerts and plays. It was their intention to play "Caste," and Charles took the part of Eccles, but whether or no the play came off I have not been able to discover. Their men were much cheered and refreshed by the rest and the amusement which their officers provided for them. Here also polo was played on very much unbroken ponies.

But it was not all rest at Ficksburg, for they kept up their martial spirit by raiding the Boers when from time to time they gathered in force on the neighbouring hills.

The squadron had been much reduced by sickness and casualties. It had landed in South Africa with five officers and a hundred and ten rank and file. It now consisted of two officers and forty N.C.O.'s and men, but

though small in numbers they were good in quality. It was decided by the authorities that they should shortly go home, and that a new lot entirely should take their place. Charles was asked to stay out and to take command of the new squadron, and this he decided to do. He was then again promoted, and became Captain in February 1902.

Surely this was a good record. Fourteen months before he had enlisted, entirely unknown and untried, as a trooper, and now he was actually in command of the squadron in which he had enlisted. He did not contemplate parting with his old men with equanimity. "I shall never get so good a lot again," he writes. "You should hear the infantry and all the regulars talk about them. It does one good. Our squadron now has twenty regulars attached to it to learn mounted infantry work! That should open the eyes of those who have laughed at us for being amateur soldiers."

Before they left, the old squadron had one more long trek together. They ended well. "I had a gallop over a kopje one day. I had only twenty men with me but we chased thirty Boers off. We killed two of them and wounded some more. I brought in one

prisoner. We had only two men hit, and I got a word of praise from the General."

"Dolly" is again mentioned about this time. "I have left her with some very nice people near Ladybrand. Poor old beast, I miss her very much; but she deserves a rest, being the only one that has gone through the whole campaign so far." Again, on the same trek, he writes: "We have had a good many scraps. The men are very good and I shall be sorry indeed to part with them. I am sorry to say that I had two men killed, but we netted eighteen Boer prisoners and so we had the best of it." He was much affected on this trek by the death of a native scout who had worked for him for some time. He had been mortally wounded. "Poor savage," he writes, "he said he wanted to have killed a Boer before he went to sleep for they had treated him very badly, but then he added 'The great White Queen go to sleep —I too go to sleep,' and with that he died. It made me feel rather queer."

In June he was once more at Harrismith. The new I.Y. had arrived. He was not pleased with their appearance. It appears that many of the men who had in England enlisted for service in the West Kent Yeomanry had been

diverted to other corps and the lot Charles found were somewhat mixed. "There will have to be some hair-raising, I expect," was his laconic comment upon them. I do not know what transpired at Harrismith in the way of "hair-raising," but he says: "I took the squadron over one day and was told to go out with them on the next with the column. I tried to represent the impossibility of doing so, but it was no good and I had to go. They were a wild lot. Some cannot even ride; and they have no sense of discipline."

At the beginning of their service most of the casualties seem to have been caused by "The Yeomen" falling off their horses. There were many broken arms and legs and ribs. However, soon they settled down, the bad were dismissed and the good quickly learnt their business and soon did well enough. He is able to write in July, speaking of his squadron as though they were a pack of hounds: "I killed two Boers with them one day, and that has done them good. I had one man killed, I am sorry to say, but after all a few proper casualties will do the squadron no end of good and teach them that war is not exactly a picnic."

At the end of this month Colonel Firman

inspected the new squadron and Charles writes home in great glee to say, "I feel much bucked up, for Colonel Firman said, 'You have made the new lot as good as the old.'"

The same kind of work went on as I have already tried to describe. Scout and patrol work for the most part, but they were also engaged in Col. Ray's flying column between and around Harrismith and Standerton. It was when at Standerton, having a few days rest, that he heard the news of his copper claim in the Klondyke. He writes: "Last night I was dining in Standerton, and in came the very man I was working with at Cape Nome. He told me the Cape had turned out to be awfully rich, and the copper claims, one of which I had staked out, had been bought for £300,000 by a company. So I think I may say my luck is a bit out, for the war has cost me £70,000." Charles would indeeed have been a rich man if he had not been so patriotic. But it is always so. I fear the great War has, as I shall presently have to show, had the effect of losing Charles some £10,000 which he had earned, and so altogether he has paid dearly for serving his country. Yet it is better so. In any mood, I take it, no sound fellow, Charles least of all, would envy the

man who selfishly regards his own pocket when his country requires his services. The profiteers and their kind, of what I suppose may be called Anglo-Hebrew inclinations, are welcome to their ill-gotten gains and to the disquieting and unenviable thoughts which they must necessarily bring with them. Charles, for his part, never repined at the sacrifices his services had entailed.

At the end of September a very pleasant rest and relief from endless marching, and such annoyances as snipers' bullets, came to the squadron. Charles was put in command of a post which was named Albertina. He writes: "I am now in command of this garrison which consists of 170 men and horses. We have one gun and a few R.F.A. I am getting a rest and have a nice hut. I relieved the 14th Hussars who had been here some months and were rather sick at having to go. I have a good many native scouts under me, and forwarding the reports they bring in to Headquarters keeps me fairly well occupied. Altogether I have a good deal of office work, which I find rather irksome."

He was glad enough, however, afterwards to have had this little experience of official correspondence.

Some times the quiet of the place was diversified by small raids on the Boers. He writes: "I am going out with a few men to-night to try to round up five Boers we have heard of in this neighbourhood." A subsequent letter reports that they got three of these gentlemen.

In November Lord Chesham, who was in Chief Command of all the Yeomanry Corps, came out to inspect Charles' squadron. He made a most eulogistic report, and Charles felt rewarded for all the hard work he had put in. Lord Chesham was afterwards extremely kind to him, and recognising the good work he had done recommended him to Lord Milner and others who were in high places in South Africa, with results of which my next chapter will speak.

Charles had now been for two years at the war. He had had no leave at all, and was beginning to feel the need of some rest. So he applied for leave, and this being granted he sailed for England in December, arriving at Southampton on the 28th of that month. The first news which greeted him on his arrival was that of the Tweefontein disaster. On Christmas Eve De Wet had surprised a mixed force of Yeomanry and regulars at this

place in a night attack. About fifty were killed, and a large number wounded. Among the former was Lieut. Hardwick, R.F.A., who was a great friend of Charles, whom he used to call "Little Pom-pom," because he had charge of a gun so-called during the South African War. Hardwick, it afterwards transpired, had rushed from his tent and had fired off a few rounds when his gun jambed. He and a very powerful lance-corporal, who was always with him when the gun was in action, were both found shot by their gun. Charles was dreadfully distressed, for when Hardwick had bidden him good-bye a fortnight before, with a strange premonition of his impending end he had said he felt that they would not meet again and gave him as a parting present a silver cigarette case, which Charles always regarded as one of his most treasured possessions.

Writing about this disaster, Col. Pott says to me, "I shall always think that had Charles been with the squadron the surprise would have failed."

It was when at home on leave that Charles became engaged to his future wife. Emily Beatrice Jones (Bee) is the second daughter of Canon H. D. Jones of Chichester, at that

time Rector of Upper St Leonards. Charles and Bee had been boy and girl lovers, and he had remained constant in his affection from those days, as was his nature. The long tested understanding between them was ratified by the heads of their respective families, and Charles, to his great joy, became engaged to be married.

His leave of a few happy weeks quickly slipped away. There were many visits to pay and much family rejoicing. Charles got together a horse or two and had some hunting, which he much enjoyed, and I must not forget to mention that he made a special journey up to the North to visit an old great-aunt who had shown us very great love and kindness all our lives. It was characteristic of him to spare three days from a short leave when newly engaged to be married and from his hunting to go up to see this dear old lady. He knew it would give her joy, and that was enough for him.

The end of February saw him on board again bound for South Africa. He had come home with Col. W. H. M. Lowe, 7th Dragoon Guards (now Major-General Lowe, C.B.), and a friendship was formed which was to last up to the end of his life. It was arranged between

them that they should return to South Africa together, and this was accordingly done.

On his return to Johannesburg Charles was offered a Lieutenancy in the South African Constabulary, and afterwards the position of Second-in-command of the 11th Battalion I.Y. with the rank of Major. But he refused both offers. The S.A.C. job did not seem to hold out much prospect of rapid promotion, and the I.Y. had been sent down to Natal and would see no more fighting for the present, and Charles did not desire the *otium cum dignitate* which the position of Major in the 11th Battalion would at that time have bestowed upon him.

He was seconded to Col. Lowe's Staff, who was in command of a mobile column engaged in rounding up the Boers. Charles became his Provost-Marshal. During March, April and May he was hard at work in his new post. He constantly writes describing the successful expeditions made by his C.O., the following being typical of many similar events: "We did fairly well last trek. We got fifty-two prisoners and lots of stock. Among the prisoners were seven of De la Rey's Staff. K. of K. was very pleased with the drive."

As it became evident that the war could

not last much longer, Charles became increasingly anxious about his future. He was, as I have stated, now engaged to be married, and he wished to get a job which would enable him to maintain himself and a wife. Col. Lowe was most kind in giving him every assistance, and Charles was most grateful to him, as he always was for any kindness shown to him. "It is most awfully good of Colonel Lowe to take so much trouble over me," he writes in a letter to his mother.

I think this will be a good place in which to print a letter written by Charles at this time. There is not much in it perhaps, but it shows his nature.

"NEAR VRYBURGH,
"*May 20th* 1902.

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I cannot let the day go by without writing a letter to you to tell you how well I know that you, dear mother, have been thinking about me and wishing me all good wishes to-day.

"I am afraid I did not remember it was my birthday first thing, but I afterwards realised the fact, and so I am just writing these few lines to tell you I am thinking of you all and of the dear old home for which I so often thank God.

"I am looking forward when we get to Klerksdorp in a few days to getting the same loving letters from you that I have always had on my birthday when spent away from home, which has been a good many times now, hasn't it?

"Well, good-night, dear mother, and love to father and all, from your loving boy,

"C. H. BLACKBURNE."

I have printed this letter, a very loving and simple letter, partly because it shows Charles' love for his home and also because it is typical of many scores of letters during the war. He scarcely ever says anything about himself, and when he does it is always with great diffidence and because he has been pressed to do so. Very rarely indeed does he pass on to those who eagerly looked for his letters any of the eulogistic remarks made by his superior officers, or indeed anything but the barest account of his exploits. If I had desired it therefore I am quite unable to write any sensational story of his doings in the South African War. Anything more delightfully modest and calmly straightforward than his war letters it would be impossible to conceive. He never, either in letters or

conversation, told the "Travellers' tales." He never posed as a hero, I suppose just because he was one.

His job-hunting did not last long. The end of the war came on June 1st and by June 21st he was appointed to Government Registration work in the Repatriation Department. He was very sad at leaving Col. Lowe and his old friends, but, as he says in a letter, "I have got to earn my living, and so must make up my mind to become a civilian once more."

He was three times mentioned in despatches, his name being in Lord Kitchener's last list. He received the D.S.O. "Never better earned," writes his Commanding Officer. He was also given, of course, the Queen's medal with three bars and the King's medal with two bars.

A fortunate chance has brought to me the following letter which was written to his parents by a trooper in Charles' squadron, during the last part of the South African War. I am glad to print some extracts from it, for the writer must have been one of those who had to submit to "the hair-raising" mentioned in this chapter. It cannot have been a very terrible process after all.

"You did not state whether Captain Blackburne was coming out again shortly. We are

all expecting him and hoping so, for a better leader we never wish to have. He is a man that fears no Boers, a sort of do-or-die fellow. He never led us but we had a charge at a kopje, there was no retiring about him unless he had an order from an officer of higher rank than himself.

"Captain Blackburne was liked by Col. Firman as well as men."

CHAPTER V

SOUTH AFRICA, 1902–1904

The Registration work upon which Charles was engaged was only a temporary job. He was glad enough to get it, and realised it was largely through the good offices of Lord Chesham that he had done so. The rush for Government employment was very great after the war. "Hundreds," he writes, "are after every job." But then he had commended himself to Lord Chesham by his splendid work in the Yeomanry, and so, after all, he did not owe his employment to mere favour, he having genuinely earned it. "No man lives without jostling and being jostled," says Carlyle, "in all ways he has to elbow himself through the world, giving and receiving offence." The success of Charles disproves the truth of this generalisation, for he succeeded in life, yet I do not think he ever did so at the expense of, or to the hurt of, others. No one ever gave less "offence" in his journey through life.

Still, the fact that he wanted to get married made him uneasy in a post which might only last for a short time, and he was much perplexed as to what step to take. He was now twenty-six years old, and it was high time for him to be settled in life. He felt he could not enter the Army as a Lieutenant at that age. He was offered a Captaincy in the S.A.C., and while considering this and other projects, Lord Milner, the British Commissioner, to whose notice he had been brought by Lord Chesham, sent for him and offered him the position of Assistant Secretary to the Repatriation Department. This offer he accepted, and quickly cabled the good news home. It was of course not a permanent job, but he was assured that it would last for at least two years, and if he succeeded in doing his work with credit it was certain to lead to other employment.

Charles had had no training in office work. He did not tell the authorities this. "I have to do a bit of bluffing," he writes, and so he set himself to his new task "as though to the manner born," and quickly began to show that he had a wonderful aptitude for business affairs. On September 1st, 1902, he writes: "I have a large staff of clerks and I must now

turn into a business man at a moment's notice. I have appeared in mufti to-day for the first time, much to the amusement of my friends."

The work was very hard, and the pressure of correspondence was enormous. Charles, however, fitted himself into his new life with the same ardour and ability which he had displayed hitherto in every undertaking to which he had set his hand. What wonderful confidence he must have had in himself! It was not boastful or unjustifiable confidence, however. No man ever existed who was less conceited than Charles. It has often been remarked that every man who is possessed of any element of greatness has always felt it in him to do great things. Disraeli, for example, knew this when at the end of his first speech in the House of Commons, as he sat down amid a titter of laughter, he was heard to exclaim: "A time will come when you *must* hear me." Thus, in a smaller sphere, Charles had equal confidence in himself. He knew he could do the work, although he had had no training for it, and events proved him to be correct. He had made no false estimate of his untried powers.

In the course of his duties he found himself once more engaged with horses.

"I have been putting the horse part of this department to rights, as well as my ordinary work. This has meant that all my spare time has been passed with the horses. There are a great number in this country which have been brought here for remounts. We are retaining the best of the mares, and buying a large number of valuable horses in Australia. At present there is no suitable man in charge of them. I am very much hoping to get the post of General Manager of all the Government horse farms in the Transvaal, and I think I have a good chance, but there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip and I am not counting on it."

The office work began to tell upon him after a time. Ten hours a day at his desk or dictating letters after his open-air life for the past nine years meant a sudden change of life which was by no means a pleasant one to Charles.

"I miss the hard exercise very much," he writes, but he stuck to it. He proved to be a valuable Assistant Secretary to the Department. His Chief, Mr Hughes, found him to be so useful that his future seemed to be somewhat jeopardised, for he had the mortification of seeing several permanent jobs given away

by his Chief because he would not spare Charles from the office of the Department. But at the end of September 1902 he was offered and accepted the post of General Manager of the Transvaal Government Horse Breeding Department. "I shall be on the Permanent Civil Staff," he writes. "I shall have a good salary and be entitled to a pension."

Charles was now settled in life. He had a secure position, and one which would give him scope for the exercise of the energy and ingenuity he possessed. He was to begin upon a salary of £750 a year with certain allowances, a house was to be built for him, and so he was able to make arrangements for his marriage.

As it was certain that Charles could not spare the time to return to England, it was decided that Canon Jones should bring Bee out to South Africa and the wedding should take place there. The date was fixed for the end of January. In the meanwhile there was much to be done. The situation of the various Government stud farms had to be decided upon, and a suitable number of mares placed on each of the selected farms. Managers and foremen had to be chosen and

taught their work, and a scheme for future development had to be devised. In fact the whole of this Department needed to be organised from the beginning. Charles was here, there and everywhere. He travelled ceaselessly, and succeeded in making the first necessary arrangements. Horse farms were set up in various places in the Transvaal and in Swaziland. Journeys were made to Durban to receive the thoroughbred stock from Australia; indeed his letters speak of a life of furious activity. "I have spent every night of the last twelve in the train," so he writes. His headquarters were to be at Standerton, and there Lord Milner handed over to him a tract of land of some four thousand acres of high veldt, about ten miles from that place. Everything was in the rough, and, when he was travelling about the country, he had to spend the whole of his time from 5.30 a.m. till dark in trying to get things into order. He determined to cultivate about a thousand acres, and to collect together the more valuable of the horses to this centre. Stables and other buildings had to be rushed up. The work he set himself to do might well have daunted any man, for in addition to that which I have already mentioned, he had

a great deal of official clerical work to do and also a large number of stock and horses to look after. Here his veterinary knowledge stood him in good stead. He writes, "My hospital generally has thirty or forty cases in it."

In the midst of his activities he had also to look out and if possible secure a house, and when found, make it ready for his bride. As I read over his letters, written at this time, and as I collect from various sources a record of what he accomplished in the first few months of his appointment, I am amazed. It seems almost impossible that so much could have been done in so short a time, but there is no doubt about it. It was done. Two thousand horses were under his charge. A staff of seven or eight white men (four men good head grooms) and about fifty Zulu horse-boys, was got together and set to work. Buildings were erected, and the plough and harrow set to work upon the open veldt. "The wilderness was made to rejoice and blossom as the rose."

No wonder he had to be at it from "5.30 to dark." Yet in the midst of this great pressure of affairs he did not forget his home, nor did the interest of his approaching marriage make him forget the friends of his boyhood.

His letters came regularly, week by week. He knew how eagerly they were looked for, and he never failed to write them, although sometimes they were short notes scribbled in the train or late at night after a very long day's work. He was much distressed to hear of the death of the old aunt to whom he had paid a visit when home on leave, and he writes :

"My dearest Mother,—I am so sorry to think of you and all the work and sadness settling up dear old Auntie's house must have caused you. I can well imagine how you felt when you said good-bye to the old house for the last time. We always had a warm welcome there, and I really think that some of the happiest days of my life as a child were spent there. Certainly the first horse I ever rode was in the stable-yard there. These changes are inevitable, but I have a strange longing sometimes for the days gone by and for the loved ones who have left us. . . . I am so glad they have given me the D.S.O., for you will be pleased about it. I remember thinking when we said good-bye to you and father at Chatham in 1900, how ripping it would be if either of us could do

anything that would lead to something of this kind, so that you might feel glad that you had put up with the sadness and anxiety of letting us go. Ever your loving boy,

"CHARLES."

And again on Christmas Eve he writes the following tender little letter, which will serve further to illustrate his character:

"STANDERTON,
"*Christmas Eve*, 1902.

"DARLING MOTHER,—I have been reading my mail this afternoon which was waiting for me on my return from Pretoria, and now, just before turning in, I have been reading all your letters. From what Hilda tells me, I am afraid you will have none of your boys with you to-morrow. Dear mother, I know what a trial it will be to you, and so I cannot help sending you a few lines before I go to sleep to tell you that my heart will be at my home and my thoughts will be with the best mother God ever gave to any man, to-morrow. Don't fret, dear mother, because we are all away from you, being men we have to go out into the world, but that only makes the thoughts of home all the sweeter.

"I am going a thirty-five mile drive to-morrow to a place called Bethel, with Arthur Staunton. I don't like the idea of a Christmas dinner at the railway restaurant where I have so often to get my meals these days.

"I shall be with you in spirit to-morrow, and may you and father spend the happy and peaceful Christmas which you deserve.

"Fondest of love, dear mother. Ever your loving boy,

"CHARLES."

About Christmas time the day of his wedding was fixed, and he heard that Canon Jones and Bee had booked their passage in the "Kinfauns Castle." He had some difficulty in getting a house in Standerton. This place before the war had been a small Boer town on the High Veldt, consisting of a few houses, stores, church, railway station and hotel. After the war it became an important military centre and a brigade of British troops were quartered there. Barracks were built, and a considerable population floated to the place. There was naturally a great demand for houses of all sorts. Charles had been

sharing a cottage with two officers and fortunately for him, as they were leaving, he was able to secure it for himself and his bride. It was not exactly a palace. "It is very small," he writes, "but I am lucky to get a house of any description. I am having it painted and papered. It has got two little verandahs with French windows opening on to them and there are some fruit trees, which is a great thing, and I am having the garden made and putting in some flowers."

This I am told he managed to do, and the little place wore a smile of welcome for its mistress when she should arrive.

On February 9th, 1903, the "Kinfauns Castle" arrived at Durban with Canon Jones and Bee on board. The following day the wedding took place. Charles had travelled down the day before. He was up to the eyes in work, and could only spare a fortnight for the honeymoon.

The wedding ceremony was performed at St Paul's, Durban, Canon Jones in some mysterious manner acting both as parent of the bride and officiating clergyman. How he managed to discharge this dual function I know not, but apparently it was done. Capt.

Arthur Lynch-Staunton, Bee's relative and Charles' friend, acted as best man.

The wedding ring was made out of a nugget of Klondyke gold which Charles had dug up himself and had long kept for this purpose. The young couple spent their brief honeymoon at Amanzimtoti and at the Marine Hotel, Durban. Before the end of February Charles and Bee were at Standerton.

Many disappointments and much work awaited the young couple on their return. Charles found news awaiting him that thirty of his mares had unaccountably died in Swaziland. Thither he went post haste, only to find that another twenty had died in the interim. The same kind of reports came to him from his other horse farms throughout the Transvaal, and so it was decided to sell five hundred of the mares and to give up the out-farms, and to bring the rest together to be under his own eye at Standerton.

Their domestic arrangements were held up by the non-arrival of furniture from England. Charles in his letters makes a great joke of the shifts to which they were put to make their home presentable, and describes its furnishing as being on the principle of that adopted in the farce, at that time very popular, entitled

"Our Flat." Gradually, however, the little home was made shipshape and a certain amount of comfort ensued.

But Charles was comparatively seldom to enjoy the rest which most men find in their homes. The stud farm, Charles' headquarters, was about ten miles from Standerton, and when he was not travelling on business connected with his Department he spent the whole of each day there. To ride or drive ten miles first thing in the morning and then to return over the same distance at the end of a long day's work is no light task. Sometimes his wife accompanied him, and the two spent long days in the saddle, thirty or thirty-five miles a day being by no means unknown. This close attention to work did not, however, make him forgetful of his friends. Charles was never so engrossed in his affairs as to be narrow in his sympathies. He was always a welcome guest, and he found time to visit an increasing number of friends. There were expeditions to Pretoria, and Johannesburg partly official, partly for pleasure, where Charles' many friends were most hospitable. Sir Arthur Lawley, Lieut.-Governor of the Transvaal, Mr Jamieson, Commissioner of Lands, Mr Smith, head of

the Agricultural Department, and Mr Hughes, his old Chief in the Repatriation Department, entertained them on these visits. On one of them Charles received his D.S.O. from General Lyttleton, at that time Commander-in-Chief in South Africa.

They also found time to pay visits to friends nearer at hand. Major and Mrs Higginbotham at Standerton, Mr Hugh Wyndham at Kroomdraai and others.

In June the Agricultural Board approved of a scheme which Charles had drawn up for the purchase of pedigree sires in England and had voted the sum of £10,000 for this purpose, and so in July he and his wife returned to England.

For two months Charles was busy buying his horses. It was no light task. His journeys lay throughout England and Ireland. He was very anxious to make the money at his disposal go as far as possible, and this was not an easy matter when it was known that he was buying for Government. Many horse-dealers were astonished to find an official who was as careful about the price he paid as if he were buying for himself. I need hardly say that Charles refused to adopt the "tricks of the trade," and when he found the "luck

Beginsell

The Dam and Buildings

penny" system was a necessary part of horse-dealing in one portion of the United Kingdom, he kept a careful account of his own "luck pennies" and expended them in making additional purchases. About forty to fifty pedigree mares and horses were collected altogether.

While in England he visited Norfolk with the intention of finding, in that agricultural county, someone who could undertake the management of the big farm at Standerton, which he was anxious to cultivate by the most up-to-date methods. Mr Tom Curl accepted the post, and he returned to South Africa with Charles and proved to be a great help to him.

On October 1st the party embarked on board the steamship "Kumara." This was by no means a light undertaking, and he was not too well served by the grooms he had engaged to help him. "The men I have got," he writes, "are not the most expert of horsemen." During the whole of the voyage Charles had to work night and day with his valuable charges. His wife says, in a letter written from on board ship, "Charles has groomed six of the most unruly horses himself all the voyage."

In addition to the horses which he was taking out to South Africa, there were six Andalusian donkeys and four couple of hounds.

All things come to an end, and this anxious voyage ended on October 19th. Charles was glad indeed to see the top of Table Mountain.

On his return to Standerton on the 24th he was greeted with nothing but bad news. "Everything that could have done so seems to have gone wrong," he writes. Three hundred of his mares were dead; the farming was either much behindhand or very ill-done; the buildings, which ought to have been finished, were not even begun, and things generally were in a mix-up. Charles was furious at the bad management of those he had left in charge, moreover he found the authorities at Pretoria were not in a pleasant mood. He got no praise for the skilful purchases he had made, and no interest was taken in the fine horses which he had brought out with so much pride to South Africa. In the Agricultural Department the greatest gloom prevailed, caused by disasters which had occurred at the stud farm. So dismal a state of affairs might well have dismayed anyone. They were to Charles, however, but a call to further work. The Director of Agri-

culture really thought he was the only man who could straighten out the tangle into which things had got, and gave him absolute authority to take any of the steps which he deemed to be necessary. He had much unpleasant work before him. He began by dismissing three utterly untrustworthy managers and was fortunate in finding Mr de Mestre, who proved to be a right hand to him for the future.

Mr de Mestre was an Australian, and had fought with the Australian Light Horse during the war. He was a first-rate fellow and a skilled horseman. With his help and that of Tom Curl to manage the agricultural work, and a veterinary surgeon sent to him by the Department and a thoroughly qualified accountant to do office work, Charles found himself with an able staff and could face the future with equanimity. The remaining outlying farms were shut down and many of the remaining mares were sold to the Boer farmers. Thus Charles soon cleansed the Augean stables, but it was only at the expense of unremitting toil and much worry and anxiety. But all through he was supported by the goodwill and the cordial appreciation of the authorities of the Transvaal, as will be seen from the

letters which I print at the end of the next chapter.

On November 8th Charles' first child was born, a little girl, whose arrival was the cause of great joy to the young couple. Alas, poor mite, she only lived eleven days, and the overworked and loving father had the sad task of laying her to rest in the cemetery at Standerton.

Charles and Bee were not sorry to leave this town and to move out to Beginsell in the following Decembér. Their little house had many sad memories for them now, and the new home brought with it fresh interests, and moreover did away with the necessity and the hardship of those long drives from Standerton to the farm which I have already mentioned.

Beginsell

Charles with his Hounds

CHAPTER VI

BEGINSELL, 1904–1906

Beginsell, the Transvaal Government Stud Farm, was the name of the Dutch farm which formed Charles' headquarters. On this there was a little tin house. It was not exactly a palace, indeed it was so modest an abode that when afterwards it became necessary to move it, it was found to be possible to place it upon a couple of waggons and move it bodily. It consisted of two rooms and some sort of an annexe, yet here Charles and Bee lived happily enough for eight months.

The house-warming consisted of a Christmas dinner given to the staff. There were seven of them, and they and their host and hostess taxed the capacity of the "mansion" to the uttermost. The primitive household equipment is displayed in the following extract from a letter:

"Dinner consisted chiefly of a sucking pig, but as our oven could not hold it, the Kaffir

boys made a fire outside and we had it cooked in the Dutch fashion."

The move was certainly to the advantage of the farm and the stock. Also the pack of hounds which Charles had gathered together and which had been faring badly at the hands of their Zulu kennel keepers, now began to improve in condition. Charles often took them out for a few hours, and Bee acted as whipper-in.

It seemed fated that their life should never be lacking in anxiety, for in January 1904 Bee met with a nasty accident. She had been visiting some friends in Standerton and had ridden in upon her favourite horse, Dan Leno. Upon preparing to return the horse got a fright and reared up and fell over backwards, crushing Bee beneath him. A long illness ensued, and it was at first feared that she had sustained a serious injury. However, after six weeks she was able to return to Beginsell. Dan Leno never carried his mistress again, but was sold as a punishment for his misdemeanour.

About this time Charles showed that he had inherited some of the engineering ability of his grandfather, for three large dams were planned and built by him in suitable valleys

on the farm, with the intention of forming lakes when the rainy season came. He had no engineer to design the dams, but the experiment proved that they were most successful, and a considerable lake was formed which proved to be of the greatest value to the stock for the future.

In the spring, Mr Smith, the Chief of the Agricultural Department, paid Charles a visit, and his official report of what he had seen proved to be a great encouragement to him. And indeed the "wilderness had blossomed." A few short months before there had been merely a barren stretch of open veldt, now there was a well-cultivated farm of a thousand acres, there was ample accommodation for a large number of horses, farm buildings, offices, etc., and best of all, a big lake of water.

Things were certainly not less strenuous, but they were much happier than they had been. Thomas Curl proved to be worthy of all the confidence which Charles had reposed in him, and the labour of an ever-increasing correspondence was considerably lightened by the services of a first-rate shorthand writer and typist.

It is very pleasant to be able to record among the unceasing hard work of this time

the interesting interludes of enjoyment which occurred. There were horse shows at Potchefstroom, Carolina, and other places in the Transvaal, Natal, and Orange Free State. Charles always exhibited at these, and acted as judge of those classes in which he had no exhibits. Then there were race meetings at Johannesburg and Standerton. At the latter place Charles was steward of the Turf Club. At Johannesburg he won a race with his mare Lightheart, which he had taken out from England. He writes modestly enough about this, as follows :

" Lightheart won us a race. She has been very naughty on previous occasions, not running straight and rushing about all over the course. I was so angry with her that, as she had to carry a very big weight, I made her carry even more than she was obliged, for I rode her myself and I am glad to say she won easily."

But there were many anxieties. Disease broke out among the pedigree cattle, and several of his valuable cows died. Also of the mares he brought out from England, several died of a mysterious ailment which the authorities put down to vegetable poisoning of some kind, but the most painstaking research

The first House at Beginsell

by the government botanists did not reveal the nature of the unknown complaint.

There was still very much travelling to be done, and he writes: "I have just been round the majority of the towns in the Transvaal to arrange about sending horses to them," and Bee's letters constantly show a record of Charles' travelling activities. "Charlie has been away travelling for the last ten days," and again, "four nights out of the last week Charlie has spent in the train." Also when he returned to his home there was little rest or recreation. Bee says, "Charlie is just off to spend his third night up with a sick horse," and often when a day's shooting was arranged it was interrupted, as the following extract will show:

"Charlie went out to shoot with General Burn Murdock, but he had to leave him as he was sent for to see a sick mare."

But after all it was not all "grind." Many friends came out to Beginsell to visit them, especially on Sundays. As I read over the letters of this period I am much impressed with the abilities of the young housekeeper who had to provide lunch or breakfast for unexpected guests at a moment's notice. It must have been a funny little house in which to

entertain friends, and yet these friends must have been well content with their entertainment, for they came without fail week by week.

Charles had many occupations. There were Agricultural Conferences to attend; articles to be written on Horse Breeding for the *South African Agricultural Journal*; and the many tasks incidental to the organization of so considerable a department. But they were all done and well done, and he was able to write in August of this year to his mother: "You will be glad to see, in the paper I sent you, that I have got a word of praise in the House."

I must return again to the statement that I have made more than once already. For in writing this memoir I am anxious above all to display Charles' character. Amid all these interests and occupations he never forgot the friends and the associations of his home and boyhood.

In April he heard of the death of his uncle's old coachman, and he writes as follows:—

"Beginsell, Standerton,
"16*th April* 1904.

"Dearest Mother,—I had no idea that your news about poor old Wade would have knocked me over so much. It is one of the

saddest things that could have happened. It has brought back so vividly to my mind childhood's happy days. It is amazing what strong impressions are made upon us when young and when I think that Wade was the first to teach me about horses and their management, I feel the sad news of his death very much. He is quite the last link with that dear old house, and I think some of the happiest of my childhood's days were spent there. It is a poor end to his life " (he was killed in a carriage accident) " and I would much rather have heard that he had passed away peacefully. I am indeed glad to hear that you paid him every tribute that was possible. I of course knew that you would be sure to do so. I little knew when as a youngster I used to listen to every word he said with the keenest interest, I should find, as I have done, the extreme value of what I learnt from him. . . . I swore by him as a child, and now as a man I feel my old friend's death more than I can say. Your loving boy, "CHARLIE."

After many delays, caused partly by the loss of some of the original plans, Charles' new house was begun in April. He had made the plans for the house himself and it was

designed to meet all the requirements of their necessarily modest household. One or two white servants, including the faithful Wheeler, who had gone out to South Africa with Bee, and some black house boys, formed the domestic staff. The new house was a bungalow, containing three sitting-rooms and five bedrooms. There was a wide verandah all round, which was made as beautiful as possible by flowers and flowering plants and provided the typical South African stooep. Into this house they moved in the month of August, just in time to receive His Excellency Lord Milner, High Commissioner of South Africa, who, with Lord Henry Seymour his A.D.C. and Mr Geoffrey Robinson, Private Secretary, paid a visit of inspection to the stud farm.

This long expected visit passed off most successfully and Lord Milner appeared to be pleased with what had been done.

The following day Charles turned out in style, a brake and fine team of four black mares, in which he drove His Excellency to Standerton for the state entry of that town. They were attended by an escort of S.A.C., and the officials of the town rode out to meet them as they approached. Various festivities ensued, among them being a garden party

given by the Mayor, which was attended by all the neighbourhood clad in their best attire. The somewhat primitive state of society at that time is shown in the " kit " in which one " Dutchman " appeared, consisting of dress coat, top hat, yellow waistcoat and brown boots.

The new house proved to be a comfortable home. " We are simply delighted with it," Bee writes, and soon it was made very pleasant by the planting of a garden, trees and shrubs. Many visitors were received with open hospitality. As I have said, friends near at hand at Standerton constantly came out to Beginsell, but others from a distance were also entertained, among them Sir R. and Lady Solomon, Dr Jameson, and Mr John Buchan. There was, however, no easier time in store for Charles, on the other hand, his work seemed steadily to increase if that were possible. Letters from him and Bee show that he lived a life of ceaseless activity. Charles always pulled his full weight and had no idea of being a passenger in any concern in which he was engaged.

The following letter from Mr Smith, Chief of the Transvaal Agricultural Department, bears testimony to his resourcefulness and

ability: "If I had not confidence in you and in your ability to make light of all difficulties, I should feel uneasy at not being able to send you the engines you ask for, but I know how well you have done on previous occasions and I feel quite confident that you will now manage somehow without them."

Indeed he needed to keep a cool head, and the fact that so often, when he was obliged to be away, things went wrong, proves the value of his management. On one occasion he was away on business for a fortnight. He left his head foreman in charge, who declared that he would carry out everything "just as the Captain did." His idea of doing so, and of exerting his authority, was to speedily fall out with the clerk, who met Charles on his return with two black eyes and a swollen lip, the tokens of the displeasure of his temporary chief.

The black boys seemed to look upon Charles as a miracle worker. They had seen him performing so many successful operations on the horses that they deemed nothing too hard for him, so one day when a Zulu horse-boy had had his ear bitten off by a vicious stallion, he came to the "Big Boss" with the ear in his hand, asking him to stick it on again.

In January 1905 a big Agricultural Conference was held at Standerton. He writes, "I have been appointed to represent the Transvaal, and the Standerton farmers have nominated me to represent this district." A large number of delegates visited the stud farm after the Conference. No less than thirty-seven of them being entertained to lunch one day.

This visit was a great success and was much appreciated by the Boer farmers from the Transvaal and other States, as the following letter from the Chairman of the Lyndenburg Society will show:

"PRETORIA,
"*January* 21*st*, 1905.

"CAPT. BLACKBURNE, D.S.O.,
"Government Stud Farm,
"Standerton.

"DEAR SIR,—On behalf of Lyndenburg Agricultural Society, I beg to express my thanks to you and Mrs Blackburne for your hospitality extended to us as delegates on the occasion of our visit to Standerton. I also want to express my appreciation of what I saw and the excellent progress you have made towards solving the future of a class of

farmers who must take their place as the country's best citizens.

"Being situated as you are in the best veldt for stock breeding, you have already formed the nucleus of the greatest industry of the Transvaal, and, unlike others, a lasting one, although time must elapse before the average farmer can receive much benefit. I think I may assert that under your able management, both farmers and government will benefit very materially in a few months' time, and that the money invested will prove remunerative in every way. I am, Yours faithfully,

"Huyton Coorforth."

Charles and Bee always got on with the Boer farmers, and after the big luncheon party I have mentioned, one of them made a speech in which he said, "We knew we were coming out to see a model farm, but we did not know that we were to see also a model house and a model wife."

That was just what Bee was, a model wife. How she managed to do so much as she did in the South African climate I don't know. For in addition to all her work for her guests, she looked after the poultry of the farm and

her gardens. Then, when Charles was away, she used to ride out with the hounds each day. She was never really robust and she had some great illnesses which would certainly have made an invalid of one less courageous than she was.

In May 1905 she had a serious attack of enteric fever, and this, coming on the top of the loss of her baby girl, the riding accident, and an attack of dysentery, was the final blow so far as her health was concerned. It became clear that she must return to England, at any rate for a time, and perhaps, so the doctors said, it would prove to be impossible for her to return to South Africa.

In July she left Beginsell for the last time and returned to England.

I have omitted to relate one or two incidents which may be interesting, the relation of which will serve to illustrate the life of varied interests which Charles led.

At Christmas time 1904, an amateur pantomime got up by the officers at the barracks was given at Standerton. Charles was pressed to assist in it. He was reluctant to do so, but at length gave way and took a prominent part, singing four songs and doing "a cake walk." A party was gathered together at

Beginsell, and they drove to the barracks and on to the pantomime, in circus fashion, in an ambulance drawn by ten mules, Charles being the coachman.

As illustrating the difficulty of farming on the High Veldt, the two following incidents are worthy of record. On one occasion a swarm of locusts threatened to settle on the farm. Everyone rushed out with tins and cans and gongs to scare them off, and this was successfully done; while large tracks of the surrounding country were stripped bare of vegetation by these unwelcome visitors, Beginsell escaped unscathed. This trouble was no sooner averted, however, than a greater took its place. Bee writes, Charles being away at the time: "We had the most appalling hailstorm last night. Wheeler and I were petrified with fright. My garden has been stripped completely, flowers and vegetables alike are destroyed and the damage to the crops on the farm is quite dreadful to see. Charles was so proud of them this year. Such things make one wonder if this country can be meant for white men."

Charles undoubtedly felt very lonely when Bee had left him. It cannot have been cheerful for him to return to his deserted

Charles on a favourite Hunter at Tyddyn

home after his long day's work, but he does not complain. His great anxiety for Bee's health, however, is shown in every letter. Of himself he said, "I am managing to rub along all right, but the house seems very quiet and lonely." Later in this year he was given leave of absence. He arranged to combine work with pleasure, and as more thoroughbred horses were needed in the country, he determined to buy them in England and Ireland.

He stayed on at Beginsell long enough to receive Lord and Lady Selborne, who visited the farm at the beginning of December, and on the 4th he embarked on the *Walmer Castle* and returned to England, December 22nd, just in time for Christmas at home.

The whole family met together in the old home. We were a large party, my stepfather and mother, four sons and their wives, and my sister. It was a unique gathering. We had never been together before. Charles was the life and soul of the party.

Early in 1906 Charles set to work to select and buy the horses he required. He was much troubled at the prospect of having to return to South Africa alone and it depressed him a good deal to discover from the doctors

that his wife's health would never suffer her to live in that country.

It so happened that he went in March to Liverpool to receive some horses which he had bought in Ireland. He stayed with some old friends of our family, Mr and Mrs Hugh Gould. Mrs Gould is the daughter of the Rev. E. Meredith, who had been a rector of Burleydam in the days of our childhood, in which delightful Cheshire village my father had had a country house. The friendship which began there had been always kept up. It was while staying with these friends that Charles happened to say how much he wished he could hear of a good job in England, as he feared his wife could never live in South Africa. It so happened that Mr Gould, together with Mr Douglas Horsfall, Mr Frank Tobin, Mr Roger Sing and other well-known Liverpool gentlemen, were directors of a large company known as White's Carriage Company. Their managing director had been recently convicted of fraud and they were anxious to find a successor to him. Mr Gould asked Charles if he would take on this job or if he would consider it to be *infra dig.* Charles had no false pride about him. Here was an honest way of making a living and

earning a good salary. The concern was a large one and employed many hundreds of horses, and after careful thought he closed with the offer.

He was sorry indeed to end his connection with the Transvaal and with South Africa where he had previously lived so happily, also he was sorry to bring to an end a life spent in the open air in which there was abundant opportunity for adventure and sport. He had by this time an assured position in South Africa. He had earned a very considerable reputation as a Government official, but it was inevitable that he should do so, and Charles never made a " song," as he used to express it, about a thing that was inevitable. May saw him and his horses embarked on the steamship *Inanda* on his way back to South Africa for the last time.

In June he was at Durban. He spent a month in settling up his affairs, handing over the farm to his successor, and then he turned his back, sadly enough, upon the great and successful enterprise which he had been chiefly instrumental in carrying through, and upon which he had expended four years of his life.

On July 4th he sailed from Cape Town.

By the end of the month he was at Southampton.

I have tried not to overload the pages of this memoir with letters, often-times they are not read, also I have been anxious not to print a large number of laudatory notices, letters, etc. I hope I shall be considered to have acted wisely in this. I feel I must print the following for they substantiate the accuracy of the statements I have made in this and the previous chapter, I select them out of a considerable number of similar letters and papers.

(Letter from Sir Arthur Lawley.)

"Government House,
"Pretoria,
"*Dec. 3rd*, 1905.

"My dear Blackburne,—I am anxious not to leave the Transvaal without placing on record my high appreciation of the services which you have rendered to the Transvaal Government in carrying out their policy of establishing and organizing the stud farm, as I well remember everything which had to be done in selecting suitable farms, arranging for

the erection of buildings, breaking up new land for crops and putting them into cultivation, collecting suitable sires and mares and organising a system of rendering available the services of the stallions in the country districts.

"Our efforts, as you know, were rather hindered than otherwise by the military authorities leaving on our hands an unwieldy mob of inferior mares. I also know that you were handicapped by the necessity of having to observe economy in the expenditure incidental to the organisation and administration of the farm. I think that the results which you have achieved reflect the greatest possible credit on your judgment in the selection of the horses, and on your administrative capacity, as shown in the way in which the farm is laid out and generally managed.

"I hope those who are to be in future responsible for the government of the Transvaal will recognise not only the value of the undertaking to the country, but also the excellent services which you have rendered. Yours sincerely,

"Arthur Lawley,
"*Lieut.-Governor.*"

(From Mr Edwin Jameson, Commissioner of Lands.)

"PRETORIA,
"*22nd June* 1906.

"DEAR CAPTAIN BLACKBURNE,—It is with genuine regret that I accept your resignation, and I can only thank you for the admirable work which you have done in connection with the agricultural department. Well do I remember the chaotic conditions which prevailed after the war. The Standerton Stud Farm, which has been your special charge, has gradually but steadily been transformed into a most valuable asset, it has been conducted on lines of economy and efficiency, and thus you will always have the satisfaction of looking back upon your work here as one of usefulness and benefit to the whole colony.

"We shall regret your absence but wish you every success. Yours sincerely,

"EDWIN JAMESON."

(Extract from a letter by Mr F. H. Smith, Director of Agriculture.)

"We were quite taken aback when his cable came and we learned that he was resigning. Some men are respected because of their

abilities and the manner in which they perform their work, and others are esteemed for their personal qualities ; it is seldom the same individual is really regarded for both, but it is so with him. He was excellent at his work and delightful as a colleague, and that is why we shall all feel his loss so acutely. But his work and worth were known and appreciated beyond the department, and I have no hesitation in saying that the farmers generally will be just as sorry to lose him as we are, and that is saying a good deal.

. . . . .

He will have the satisfaction of knowing his labours have not been in vain, and that he has placed horse-breeding in the Transvaal upon an entirely different plane. He has left the country better than he found it, more than that no man can do."

CHAPTER VII

LIVERPOOL, 1906–1907.

CHARLES wasted no time in taking over his new work. In August he was settled in his new home in Liverpool. The alteration in his life and all its circumstances was sudden and complete. For wide open veldt he had, as his new outlook, rows of houses; for the quiet of his South African farm the sights and sounds of a busy city.

To change from the life of a government official to the life of a business man in a privately owned concern is not as easily done, in the case of most men, as is the change of gears in a motor car. But Charles had a wonderful power of adaptability, and as he had at a moment's notice changed, as I have shown, from soldier to official, so now again he changed from official to business man.

The White's Carriage Company was an undertaking with many branches. There were hundreds of cabs, there was a well-equipped coach running in the summer months between

At Aintree

Chester and Shrewsbury, there were large contracts with emigrating agencies and with Yeomanry Corps. In fact, in everything in which horses are employed the company had an interest. There were many different centres, a large staff of clerks, district managers, etc., to supervise, and the whole concern had got out of hand during the troubles under the late managing director.

Charles was at his best when in a tight corner or when he had a tough job on, so he set to work with characteristic energy and tact to reduce chaos to order. This he succeeded in doing and, in a wonderfully short space of time, he turned what had looked like a failing business into a profitable and even flourishing concern. I do not suppose it would be of any interest to those who are likely to read this memoir if I were to enter into the details of his new work, the description of the details of business affairs does not give much scope to the writer of history or biography. Suffice it to say, even if it is necessary to so do, that Charles brought to bear upon the new undertaking the same enterprise, the same straightforward honesty, the same ingenuity as he had displayed in all the several situations in which he had been placed.

Much of the work was uncongenial to him but upon that I need not enlarge. Charles was never a man to quarrel with his bread and butter, and here he was earning a good income, and he wasted no time in repining. No man ever indulged less than he in the paralysing practice of self-pity.

But if some of the work was uncongenial to him, this was not the case with other portions of it. He had to make large purchases of horses, and this entailed journeys to Ireland and to the Continent, which he much enjoyed. Then he used occasionally to drive his coach from Shrewsbury to Chester. This was a smart turn-out in which Charles took a great pride. Two men in beaver hats and red coats, five or six changes of horses, each four being of the same colour, and brought out from their stables in best coaching style.

Also he made, in Liverpool, many friendships, the chief one being with Mr Milner Stewart-Brown, who went into partnership with him when a new company was started, and for whom he had a great affection.

The work was not as exacting as that which he had been doing in South Africa. He had much more leisure for sport. He was a member of the Liverpool Polo Club and a

regular player of this best of all games. He was at somewhat of a disadvantage in this game for he was left-handed, and he found it a great drawback to use his right hand so much, but his first-rate horsemanship made him worth his place on a good side, and a most valuable member of it upon occasions. He also took the keenest interest in the great sporting events connected with Liverpool; the Grand National and the Waterloo Cup always found him with a good house party, for many of his old friends gathered round him at these times. Capt. Bertram Pott (now Lieut.-Colonel), Arthur Daniel (the friend of the old Norfolk days), Col. Lowe (now Major-General, C.B.), and his brother, Major J. G. Blackburne, being the most regular of them.

Sometimes long holidays were taken. Each year saw him in Scotland during the latter part of August and in September. He always went to shoot with Mr C. J. Ebden at Elvanfoot, Lanarkshire; and with his great friend Capt. Pott at Stow, Midlothian. These visits were a source of unfailing delight to him and they compensated him for much drudgery and uninteresting work in Liverpool.

Charles was the best of sportsmen. He was not one of the kid glove and arm-chair variety,

whose sole idea of a day's shooting is to stand outside a covert or in a butt on a moor. He was a good shot at driven birds, and of course he much enjoyed a big day, but far more than these he enjoyed those by-days which he spent with dog and gun alone, or with a congenial companion. Charles had, to the full, that knowledge of game, and sense of the true hunter, without which it is useless to go out on such days. Upon Mr Ebden's property at Elvanfoot there is a large marsh several miles in extent. It was customary on by-days to divide the party into couples, each couple taking a name, and there was a sweepstake upon the event. Charles was always put in charge of one couple and he frequently managed to carry off the stake. This was not because he was the best shot by any means, but because he knew where to look and how to look for his game. Some men have literally no idea of "hunting." They talk, they walk down wind, they take no care to conceal themselves, they go splashing noisily through boggy pools or clumsily treading on dry sticks. Such "sportsmen" ought to confine themselves to covert shooting, for they can never achieve much on such a place as the marsh at Elvanfoot. Charles was of a

different kind, his early training, his knowledge of the habitat of bird and beast, his experiences in the North-west and in Africa, where he had known what it was to have to find your game if you were to have fresh meat for dinner, and his keen natural instinct combined to make him the winner on these "off-days." Some of the party used to say, "What luck you have," when he emptied his well-filled game bag, but all true sportsmen will know that there was no luck about it. Charles saw his game because he knew where to look for it. He knew the likely places, he knew how to approach his game, and his well-trained dog knew as much about the business as he did himself. It was thus that he was universally successful in rough shooting.

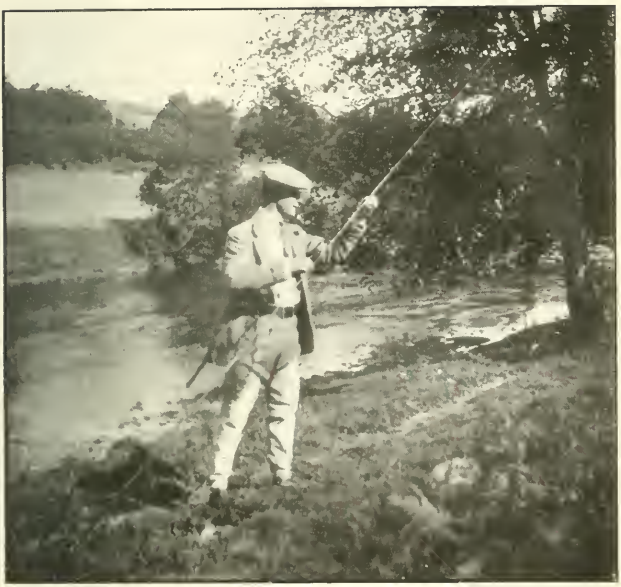
Also in the neighbourhood of Liverpool he got a good deal of sport, for many friends constantly invited him to shoot with them.

Charles always shot from his left shoulder. He was a very quick and excellent shot. I don't know that he was more excellent at one kind of shooting than another, he was good all round. I often shot with him and I don't know that I have ever seen anyone who was more generally and uniformly reliable. Sometimes indeed he was quite brilliant, and I

remember shooting at a place in North Wales where he had been a few weeks before. At one drive the head keeper put me at a stand where obviously the birds would come over very high. He told me this and added, "If you do as well as the Captain did, Sir, you will have a good time." Well, the birds came over all right, but I did not have a good time, and after the drive, when my one or two victims were being picked up, the keeper told me how Charles had accounted for some twenty birds in the same place. I felt rather small, but it showed me that dear old Charles had been rather big a fortnight or so before.

On June 24th, 1907, to the great joy of Charles and Bee, their daughter Beatrice Audrey was born.

I think this would be a suitable place for me to write something about Charles and his religion. It is quite certain that a description of any man's life and character would be in no way complete without some detailed reference to this subject. Religion meant a great deal to Charles. I need hardly say he was not a theologian. His religion was natural and spontaneous, an integral part of a man entering fully and blithely into life. Theology, I have read somewhere, is often the instrument



Charles at Stow, Midlothian

with which men discard religion. Charles was far from being a theologian. I do not suppose he ever read a book upon theology in his life, nor do I think he ever set himself down to state his religious opinions, seriously and coherently, either to himself or to anyone else. This is not to say he did not think about religion, far from it. He often used to tell me how impressed he was by Nature. The great silences and the snowy plains of Alaska; the open flatness of the veldt as he had known it when campaigning and when out hunting; the splendour of the stars at sea all spoke to him, and spoke to him of God. He had a naturally reverent mind. I remember one day, when we were but lads, coming from an early service with him. I had made some rather flippant remark and I shall never forget Charles' genuine and very frankly expressed distaste for what I had said. His rebuke did me more good than any ecclesiastical anathemas could have done.

Then, too, Charles hated cant and pretence. He was too good an actor himself not to detect hypocrisy when he saw it, and for the hypocrite in religion he had a huge contempt. His simple and straightforward sense of the presence of God was not assisted, but rather scandalised,

by a fussy and elaborate ritual. I remember his great disgust with a church in Liverpool where, as he said to me, "the serving boys arranged their cassocks as though they were ladies' dresses." But for genuine and practical Christianity he had the greatest admiration. It was good to look at Charles' face when he was at church. It was a real act of worship, it all meant so much to him. He would fix a sincere and good preacher with his eyes, and never remove them, and such an earnest, steadfast, inquiring look came into them. He took in every word, and a good and helpful sermon was so obviously appropriated by him to be reduced to practice in his own life and conduct. He seemed grateful to the preacher who could show him "a more excellent way." Then also his religion came out in his constant and inveterate habit of private prayer. I once shared a room with him when we were both staying in Ireland. It was after the South African war. When I entered the room I found him on his knees and I asked him if he had found it hard always to say his prayers. He told me he had never omitted to do so wherever he had been, and, he added, "I have never found it at all hard." He was very insistent on this point, and he used

to get very angry with books which, and with people who, told boys not to be afraid to say their prayers at school or elsewhere. He would say, "This is the wrong way to train a boy, you are giving him the idea that it is not a natural thing to pray and that he may be laughed at for doing it, an idea that ought never to occur to his mind," and he used to add, "I have never found that anyone has laughed at me. I have been with the roughest of fellows and I have never found it difficult to say my prayers at school or at the Klondyke or during the war." I do not know that every one would think that Charles was right in this, but at any rate it shows what was his own feeling about prayer, it shows how natural an exercise it was to him. For myself, I believe that he was right, and if all of us made prayer a much more natural thing, much less artificial, not so formal, we should find it much more efficacious to ourselves and more genuinely respected by other people.

Yes, I am quite certain I am right when I say that his religion was a real thing to Charles. He found in it a source of comfort and inspiration. He would not have been what he was without it. He did not talk much about religious matters, but he practised in his life

those things for the inculcation of which religion exists, and I have no doubt at all that the Saviour of men, who always stressed conduct above orthodoxy, who taught us to do right things and kind things, rather than formulate theologies and "exercise ourselves in deep matters which are too high for us," has received him and rewarded him with "well done." One who served with him in France and afterwards in Ireland, in a letter to a relative who knew him slightly, said: "I look upon him as a good fellow in the highest sense; a man in whose presence a fellow who had a bad side to his character does not show it, no one who comes in contact with him can fail to be the better for it." This was indeed the case, and after all, if this is not to be Christian, I want to know what is. Alas, I very much fear as much cannot be said of many of us who are parsons. I fear we are not men to whom those who have a bad side do not show it, and of whom it could be said with truth, all who came in contact with us are better for it.

Charles gave an example of practical Christianity. He had the most extraordinarily kind heart, but his English reserve in the matter of the higher feelings made him constantly

try to pass himself off as a hard and stern fellow. He often used to say to me, when doing some particularly kind thing for the men who worked for him, and to whom he was always most studiously fair and considerate: "Don't think I am doing this out of sentiment, it is just a piece of good business," which, dear old fellow, he seemed really to believe. He never put his conscience to sleep with sophistries, but he very often hoodwinked his own mind with such remarks and by means of them threw dust in the eyes of mere worldly wisdom. Alas, I fear most of us adopt a precisely opposite practice, and we put our conscience to sleep in the interests of our worldly advantage. Yes, Charles was a Christian right enough.

This may be a suitable place to print some of the reminiscences of those who were Charles' great friends at Newton. They consisted chiefly of the following:—His host and hostess, Mr and Mrs C. J. Ebden, their son Mr C. H. M. Ebden (Cambridge cricket blue and good sportsman), Capt. Eric Penn (Grenadier Guards, who was killed during the Great War, in France), Mr Arthur Trevor and others.

I suppose few happier shooting parties ever met together than those which met at Newton.

Mr C. H. M. Ebden writes: "Any amount of amusing episodes come readily to mind, but most of them are personal jokes, and unless both parties are known, they might not appear to be amusing.

"One of the brightest and best to be remembered days with dear old Charles was when we split up, one 'off day,' into four parties, and had a game of all against all, giving values for every bird and beast we killed. I had the luck to go with Charles, and needless to say we were determined to win. Off we went and we worked hard, the poor keepers had a bad time, as we got a lot of hares. I can remember we did very well indeed and felt confident of beating the lot, and carrying off the sweepstake. On the way home we shot a stoat! well, we could not remember whether he had a value on the list or not. I was for leaving it behind, but Charles was all against leaving it to chance, and so, much against my will, he and I took it in turns to carry it two miles home. Having got it home they refused to give us any points for it. However it did not matter as we won anyhow.

"It always made just all the difference if the dear old fellow was at Newton or not. If it was pouring with rain he was always so

cheerful, he almost 'kidded' you that it wasn't raining at all; or, if you were having no sport, you began to think, from his spirits, that you were having one of the finest days' sport ever seen. I could write lots more, or rather think lots more, and I always shall. Dear old Charles was an institution at Newton, and now both are gone!" (the reference is to Charles and Capt. Eric Penn, Mr Ebden's brother-in-law), "and I am left! Newton can never be the same again, but my goodness! it will hold some memories."

Another of those who constantly was one of the house party writes: "I always remember him as the life and soul of the party. Always cheery and keen, but never in the least selfish or jealous in the shooting, and always ready to help and encourage anyone who was a poor shot."

A lady whose home is in the neighbourhood of Newton writes: "It is very sad to refer to those happy days in connection with Col. Blackburne, knowing they can never come again. All my memories of Capt. Penn and Col. Blackburne are of the very happiest. It was a great privilege to know such fine men, and I assure you I often look at the little corner, in winter evenings, where Col. Black-

burne used to love to have tea after a day's shooting, and how happy he was! Then those concerts, what a help he was! and how freely he gave his services. Do you remember one concert where 'The Barn' was full to overflowing? Col. Blackburne's music was missing, and he came on to the stage and said 'if any find themselves more comfortable than they should be (the chairs were a very mixed lot) will they kindly rise and see what they are sitting on!' Everybody laughed and got up, and the music was found on a chair.

"I don't know what we should have done without him at those concerts. He kept everything going, and he made all the other performers so happy and pleased. I know his many friends at Elvanfoot sincerely mourn him."

Tyddyn

Charles, Bee, and the Children

CHAPTER VIII

TYDDYN, 1910–1914

Charles was never satisfied with the life of a townsman, and he used to confess to me sometimes that the " call of the wild " sounded to him almost irresistibly. This is not to be wondered at. For eight or nine years he had been in countries of open spaces and wide prospects. He had been far away from the conventionalities of English life, and it is certain that if he had not had his wife and children to consider and to work for, he would have responded to " the call," and have gone far afield again. As it was he felt he must at least get out of Liverpool if he was to live. He used to say to me sometimes, " I cannot breathe in this place."

By this time the business was in full working order and he felt, if he were fortunate enough to find a suitable home in Wales or Cheshire, that he could overlook the affairs of the Company satisfactorily by coming to Liverpool four or five days a week. After a short search

he found just the place he was looking for in Tyddyn, near Mold, North Wales. This is a delightful little property of about 250 acres of excellent land. It contains some twenty-five or thirty acres of woods divided into five plantations, the river Alyne flows through it, and the house and buildings are on a hill-side commanding a wide view of the Welsh mountains, which divide the Alyne Valley from the Vale of Clwydd, the stately Moel Arthur and Moel Famman being the most conspicuous among them. The house was not very large, and a portion of it had been an old farmhouse in days gone by. This part was somewhat dilapidated, and Charles decided to pull it down and build a new wing on to his abode. This was speedily done, and Tyddyn House became a most comfortable family residence. Charles found some delightful neighbours, and quickly settled down, happily enough, to a rural life. He was, however, partly the business man, partly the country gentleman. He had much still to do in Liverpool and he went there several days each week. But changes had taken place there. His friend Milner Stewart-Brown had come into partnership with him, and it was not absolutely necessary for him to slave

at his work as he had done. He was far from being idle. That he could never have been in any circumstances. There was his farm to look after, and Charles took the greatest interest in this, he made many experiments in various forms of up-to-date agriculture. He always had a very full stable, and the raising of stock, the breeding of sheep, and all the many occupations connected with a properly conducted farm fully filled up any days he could spare from his business. He was supremely happy at Tyddyn. This kind of life was congenial to him, he could " breathe " amongst these Welsh hills. He had, moreover, the joy that comes from a sense of proprietorship, a joy which is only given to those fortunate people who own some land. Fields, woods, streams, cottages, buildings which belong to one seem to become part of one's self. One lives a larger life as a proprietor than it is possible to do as a tenant. Charles loved his little place. He used to cherish endless projects of adding to it and improving it, few of which, alas, he was allowed to realise. Indeed, it is a very charming little property. The farm buildings and stables are extremely good, and Charles added to them where necessary. The fields are well and conveniently

laid out. It is well watered and suitable in every way for the rearing of cattle and horses.

Charles made a miniature steeplechase course over some of the meadows, across which he trained many a youngster in the way he should go.

It was a very sporting little place. There were a goodly number of pheasants in the woods, too many rabbits, a few partridges, and the more common wild birds of England were also found here, duck, teal, snipe, woodcock, green and golden plover, and wood-pigeons of course. Charles naturally found great joy here, and though he had not much spare time for shooting when at Tyddyn, he found it a useful place for training his dogs for the more serious business of a big shoot with his friends in the neighbourhood, or on the Scotch moors.

Charles was able to hunt pretty regularly by this time. He often managed two days a week with the Flint and Denbigh Hounds and he had occasional days with Sir Watkin Wynn's famous pack. I do not know that there is anything specially worthy of mention in his hunting experiences. He always had a good horse and he went straight on the hunting field just as he did everywhere else.

On September 3rd, 1911, his boy, Charles Bertram (Peter) was born. This was a great joy to Charles. He had long desired to have a son and now he had as fine a little lad as one could wish to see.

Charles did not become self-centred or self-satisfied with his increasing happiness. Life was very pleasant to him at this time. He had his home, his wife and children, a host of friends, old and new, his hunting, much of the best shooting, and yet he did not forget larger interests and responsibilities. His old friend, Col. Pott, writes to me to say: "We often used to talk of the possibility of a European war and Charles was always fully alive to the reality of the German menace." He was deeply chagrined at the cold reception which the country gave to Lord Robert's clarion call to be prepared, and in his own special department he fully realised our unpreparedness for war. He strove to get the authorities to take some steps to provide for the large supply of horses which he knew the outbreak of a European war would necessarily demand. He never forgot the difficulties in which the Government had been involved in this respect during the South African war, and he drew up a scheme for the encouragement

of horse breeding by farmers which he submitted to the War Office. I do not know if he got any thanks for his pains or not, but nothing, in those years, was done in the matter about which he felt so keenly.

Charles, however, had relieved his mind. He knew better than most men what could be done in the way of providing horses for military purposes. He used, year by year, to mount various Yeomanry Corps during their training and he often used to say that he felt sure the authorities did not realise what a grave shortage of horses there was in the country; and also his visits to Ireland and elsewhere revealed to him the fact that Germany, in the years before the European war, was preparing for it, and buying up the horses which came into the European market.

I might add to this chapter the fact that, during the great war, he was made J.P. for the county of Flint. He never was able to fulfil any magisterial duties, but the fact of his appointment shows the high regard in which he was held in the county.

Tyddyn House

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT WAR, 1914–1915

I MUST have signally failed in my attempt to portray Charles' character if I have not made it evident that he would be among the very first to offer himself for service at the outbreak of war.

It so happened that he was staying with me at the time of the German invasion of Belgium, when it became day by day increasingly plain that England must enter the great European conflict.

Those were days which most of us passed through as in a dream. The whole face of things had changed, we were conscious that great events were looming in the murk of the future, but what shape they would assume and how they would affect us as a nation, none might know. Charles knew, at any rate, what it meant for him. It meant yet one more sudden, abrupt, change in his life. He must become a soldier once more. So he sent in his name to the War Office asking to

be attached to a cavalry regiment. But he had no idea of waiting for a reply. He knew too well what to expect of the War Office in those days, and he did not intend to eat his heart out while waiting upon the tardy processes of the official mind. It is as well that he did not, for after he had been fighting in France for a month and was then actually in command of C Squadron of the 5th Dragoon Guards, he received the reply to his application. It was a letter written by some brilliant genius at the War Office, addressed to Capt. C. A. Blackburne! and saying that they had no need of his services!!

I seldom saw Charles really angry, and he was always very considerate of those in subordinate positions, but when he told me of this when home on four days' leave, he was indeed moved with a fury of anger, and he always used to say the clerk who could send such a letter to one who had served with distinction in the South African war, and whose record it would have been so easy to look up, when England was in such dire straits, ought to be "broken." Thank God the English have not been so subservient to the official ordering of things as have the Germans, and Charles, knowing what to expect, in which

the event, as I have shown, proved him to be correct, set to work in characteristic fashion to help himself. He had two strings to his bow. There was a friend at the War Office, and there was Bee's cousin, Lieut.-Col. George Ansell, D.S.O., of the 5th Dragoon Guards. Charles wrote to both asking them to get him a job. The former replied offering that which he had to offer, viz., an "office job"; Col. Ansell wired to him to go to Aldershot, promising to do his best to take him out with the regiment. Charles did not hesitate as to which offer to accept. He was, by nature, a soldier, and he proceeded straight to Aldershot. He was singularly fortunate in being employed by Col. Ansell, a better soldier never lived, or a braver. He was a great judge of men and things, and he knew, better than most, that the British army was confronted with the biggest task in its history, and that the army would need all the right kind of men it could get before the task was completed. He, therefore, welcomed Charles to the regiment and promised to use his influence to get him gazetted to it. But things were moving rapidly, much too rapidly for the official mind, and a risk had to be run. If Charles were to wait, before leaving with the

Expeditionary Force, until he was officially in the regiment, he would never have gone at all. August 6th saw him at the Beaumont Barracks, rapidly picking up his drill, getting together his uniform, arranging which of his horses to turn into chargers, in a word, learning in a few days to become a "heavy dragoon." He had no rank in the regiment (he was, of course, a Captain in the army). A Sergt.-Major of the Regiment has told me they did not at first know what to make of him, the men thought he was an interpreter, or a war correspondent! He was told to put up Lieut.'s stars. His position was indeed anomalous. He writes to me as follows:—

"Beaumont Barracks,
"Aldershot,
"*August 7th*, 1914.

"Dear old Man,—I am awfully sorry I could not let you know what I am doing, but everything moves so quickly. Colonel Ansell, who commands this regiment and to whom I wrote, wired me to come and that he would get me into it if possible. He is doing so though I am really being smuggled in. . . .

"Ansell seems to want to have me which is very good of him. I am but a humble Lieut.

at present, but, "stand by" is what he says.

"Dear old L. I honestly feel that I am doing the right thing and that keeps everything right, but it is not so easy to go now, with the family left behind, as it was last time. However the whole conditions of life are changed now, aren't they? and that is the only way to look at it. Your affectionate brother,

"CHARLES."

It was not an easy thing for him to leave his wife and children, and, moreover, Charles was no foolhardy fellow.

> "Who, scorning danger's name,
> In eager mood to battle came,
> His valour like light straw on flame,
> A fierce but fading fire."

On the contrary, he knew there was danger ahead, that fierce fighting, a grim and stern ordeal, was before him, he knew it was more than probable that he would never return home again. He faced all this with full consciousness. He weighed the whole matter in his mind, and then, coming to the right decision, he went through with it with never a backward glance, cheerily and bravely.

There are some things of which it would be improper to write, even in so frank and intimate a memoir as this, and therefore I cannot print a letter he left to be opened by his boy when he was old enough to go to a public school, in the event of his being killed. This reference to it, however, will serve to show that Charles fully contemplated the likelihood of death.

It is extremely interesting to me to compare the unvarying reports of those who served with him, with the knowledge I have of his own calm perception of the dangers he was about to encounter. "He does not know what fear is," so wrote a distinguished general. "He never sent a man where he would not go himself," so said a Sergt.-Major of his regiment. Yes, Charles was brave enough, there can be no doubt at all about that, but it is not true to say "He did not know what fear was," if by that is meant that he did not anticipate or think of probable dangers.

I do reckon that man to be specially worthy of honour who does not know what fear is. I believe there are such men, men of the old berserker spirit, but, after all, are they the really brave men? They have the old lust of fighting, the savage instinct predominates in them, is not this only a form of mania?

I count that man to be really brave who, like Nelson for example, realises the danger he is incurring, looks the facts and the probabilities in the face, and then without murmur or complaint, without hesitation or tremour, without excitement or nervousness, cheerfully, smilingly, calmly, goes forward wherever duty may call him.

The following letter will show the kind of bravery Charles possessed:—

"5th Dragoon Guards,
"Beaumont Barracks,
"Aldershot, *August 7th*, 1914.

"My dearest Mother,—You have heard, I know, I have been taken into this regiment by George Ansell. He is most kind. Bee is arriving any moment and is to stay with the Ansells. We are due to move at any moment. It is very hard for you, dear mother, to have to go through all this again, and my heart and prayers are for the dear ones left behind. It is they who have the hard time. But I know that as things are now you would not have me do otherwise than I have done. No matter how hard it may be to do so, as long as one can feel honestly that one is doing one's duty, it helps very much. Keep in mind, dearest

mother, that this war is not of our making, we are simply obliged to face this disgraceful attack upon civilization by a nation which has become so besotted with its own importance and power as to have lost all sense of reason and honour. We have no option, we must go unless we are prepared to admit that we are not brave enough to face things out, and would rather leave it to others to take the risk.

"That is the way I look at it, it is just as much a duty to the next generation, and that helps me to leave the kids. Beyond that it is out of my hands. God bless you, dearest one, and give you the courage for which we all must pray. Your loving boy,

"CHARLES."

Charles landed at Havre on August 16th. His regiment was part of the 1st Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-Gen. C. J. Briggs, C.B.). They entrained and went to Hautmont, four miles east of Mauberge. The next day they marched some miles due north. The 22nd saw them engaged for the first time, apart from skirmishes, with the enemy on the Mons-Valenciennes Road. Thus Charles had the honour of taking part in the ever famous battle of Mons.

I have no qualifications which would enable me to describe battle scenes, and if I had they should not be used in writing this memoir. I propose to relate incidents of the Great War which help me to describe my brother's character. All who wish to do so may read in the many histories which have been written the story of the never-to-be-forgotten fighting which took place at the end of August and the beginning of September 1914. Major Corbett-Smith's book "The Retreat from Mons," tells the wondrous tale of how the two British Army Corps for a time held, then were slowly and sullenly driven back by, five German Army Corps, and how by their stubborn resistance and the great damage they inflicted on the enemy, they saved Europe. Very eloquently and very truly he writes, "There is no greater honour that a man may wear than the honour of having served in France throughout August and September 1914. Just that, in days to come, our children and children's children will point with pride to that one little word on the regimental colour, "Mons." For in that single word will be summed up the liberation of the world."

There are some retreats in military history which are more famous, more heroic, than the

most brilliant victories, Sir John Moore's retreat to Corunna for example. This is so in the case of the retreat from Mons. Those of us who only saw the battle area when trench warfare had begun can have but little idea of the nature of the fighting in those early days. It was in the open, it was continuous, often there were no supplies. There were sudden surprises, and many thrilling incidents such as were impossible when the titanic conflict had resolved itself into a warfare of position, and the German and allied armies faced each other behind miles of barbed wire and entrenched in a vast and complicated system of defences, which stretched, unbroken, from the North Sea to Switzerland.

Sometimes there was fighting on a large scale as at Le Cateau, but more often there was the continuous rearguard action, in which small groups of men lead by junior officers had abundant opportunity of distinguishing themselves. There was room for individual initiative, indeed, everything depended upon the initiative of Regimental, Squadron, or Troop Commanders.

In such fighting Charles was at his best. He was resourceful, quick to appreciate the situation, ready in decision and fearless in

doing what he saw must be done. On one occasion the regiment was under orders not to fall back until a wood, held by some French troops, had been evacuated. Time went on and no message came from the wood, Charles told me that he had an instinctive feeling that something was wrong and yet it seemed clear that the French would not leave without signifying the fact. It drew on to dusk and still no message came. Charles then took it upon himself to find out if the French were there or not and he rode towards the wood. When near to it he dismounted, and then, to use his own words, "I crawled to the edge of the wood as though I was deer-stalking. Just as I got near enough to get a look into the wood I saw, against the grey sky-line, a swarm of spiked helmets, and I can tell you I did not stay long." This incident may not appear to be worth recording, yet it seems to me to be typical of the man. A more thoughtless or less experienced officer would have galloped up to the wood, and would have quickly lost his life, or he would not have made sure about the French, in either case the Germans would have gained their objective, the retreat of the regiment would have been cut off. As it was, Charles was able to get back

unsuspected by the enemy, and the retreat was quickly carried out.

He was always very cool and collected in an emergency. On one occasion his squadron was attacked in a village, one of his troopers told me that he quickly rallied his men and made them laugh by saying, "We are not exactly in a rose garden and the sooner we are out of it the better," with that he led them across country, in a manner easy enough to the 5th Dragoon Guards, who had been made "as clever as cats" by Col. Ansell, but not so easy for the Uhlans who were in no sense the equals of our cavalry in horsemanship. It was during this retreat that Charles made what he always called the lucky shot of his life. A Uhlan was seen galloping obliquely across the front of my brother's troop, he called for a rifle and then "I held well forward and fired, to my intense surprise the horse and rider went head over heels like a rabbit well shot." Charles kept the pennon which he took from the Uhlan's lance and it used to hang over the mantlepiece in the smoking-room at Tyddyn. The exertions of the cavalry covering the retreat from Mons were incessant, horses and men were completely worn out, on one occasion they had no rations

for three days and very little opportunity of getting food of any kind. I know Charles told me that for two days he had nothing to eat but one raw egg which he found in a nest in a farm-yard. The men ate their iron rations. The regiment was heavily engaged with the enemy at Solesmes and at Fuchy, in both places the retiring troops were in a state of much confusion. On September 1st, in a fierce engagement at Néry, the regiment lost its Colonel. Leading his men in a charge he was hit and severely wounded, he was able to give a few last directions and then he passed. He died as he would have wished to die, at the head of his loved regiment. A better soldier than he never lived, and there can be no doubt if he had survived, that by now he would have been one of our most famous generals.

Charles writes as follows :—

"Now about poor George; we were attacked at daybreak and the Germans nearly succeeded in stampeding our horses, we turned out dismounted close to the lines and held the Germans in check. I came up and, as I happened to be there, we had a word about the position (our left flank was unprotected).

George told me to go there with what men I had. I collected a few. He then galloped back, mounted two squadrons, and went off with them, wide round the left flank. He rode up to the top of one ridge, ahead of his men, to reconnoitre, and they, the Germans, were close to him. They hit him and he rode back about fifty yards. One of the last things he said to his orderly was to go up into the firing line, as he would be of more use there. He was a brave man and I feel his loss most awfully. They got a doctor to him, but nothing could be done, shot through chest and back I am told.

"In my opinion the action George took in going round the flank not only saved the whole situation but established a panic among the Germans, who fled, and we captured eight of their guns.

"One of our batteries behaved magnificently, silencing the German guns one after another, at only about 800 yards range, men and officers served the guns even when minus limbs. They are great fellows."

The death of Col. Ansell was a serious blow to Charles, not only had he lost a friend for whom he had the greatest admiration and love,

but also he had, in a sense, lost his sponsor in the British Army. I have said that he came out to France with no official rank. If he had been killed the War Office would have had no cognizance of the fact. He ran a great risk, but he knew Col. Ansell was doing his utmost to get him gazetted to the regiment and he rested content with that. But now that Col. Ansell was killed his position was precarious.

I do not suppose, however, there was much time for him either to mourn the dead or to be seriously apprehensive for his own future. The fighting continued day by day. The great retreat was still in progress. Back through the Forest of Compiegne they went, arriving at the Marne, September 4th. A day of rest and bathing in the river much refreshed both men and horses. On September 5th they found themselves in the vicinity of Paris at Luigny, where they had arrived after a forty mile march. Then came the backward swing of the pendulum, then came the great advance from the Marne. Thus on the days 6th to the 10th of September the 1st Cavalry Brigade took part in the battle of the Marne, and after that rode forward with the victorious Allies to the Aisne. They arrived on the banks of

that ever famous river on September 12th, and then, marching by night and halting by day, the cavalry as advance troops, they moved, parallel with the German armies, towards the coast. Fighting was incessant, notably at Longvilliers and Soupir, from which place the 1st Cavalry Brigade held the road from Chavonne to Soissons.

Charles had proved his value as a leader of men, and by September 9th, the day after Captain Partridge was killed, less than a month after landing in France, he was appointed by Col. Winwood, who had succeeded Col. Ansell, to the command of C Squadron. The advance to the Lys continued and the fighting. Charles had some narrow escapes. On one occasion he was sitting back to back with a brother officer, eating some hasty meal, when his comrade was killed. On 10th October, having taken part in the advance to Armentieres, an attack was made upon Messines; it was brilliantly successful, and the town was held until the 31st October, when the first battle of Ypres reached an acute stage which necessitated a retirement. Charles was particularly interested in a monastery in this place, where there was a school, and he was sorely grieved when the Germans began a

fierce bombardment of it compelling the nuns and their little charges to leave their beautiful and peaceful home.

On the 30th of October the Germans made an attack upon Messines, of which a vivid description is given among the extracts from letters which follow. It was beaten off: but on the next day the 1st Cavalry Brigade had to fall back. It will be readily understood by those who have had friends in the field during the Great War, that there is very great difficulty in getting any detailed account of great events from the letters which came home. These letters had been rigidly censored, and in any case there was no time for carefully written accounts. Field post-cards and sometimes telegrams came from Charles whenever it was possible to send them, and occasionally a good long letter came from a rest camp. I have selected the following extracts almost at haphazard from a great number of letters.

About the middle of September Charles was able to write as follows :—

"I am now commanding 'C' Squadron. I have had it for a fortnight."

He always took the most cheery view of the future. On October 15th he writes: "I

am very fit and well. Things are going on very well. We are in Belgium again. We crossed the frontier yesterday. I suppose this is easily the largest and longest battle on record. We are steadily moving on and pushing them back. The natives all say of the Germans '*ils avaient pu des Anglais*,'" and a week later he says of the Germans, "It will not be long before these people are taught their place." He had so much distinguished himself in the fighting that he ceased to be a volunteer serving with the regiment temporarily, but to his great delight was gazetted to the regiment itself, being placed among the Captains with "precedence" next below Capt. J. E. D. Holland, and dated back to the 5th August 1914. He writes as follows: "They have done well for me, haven't they? Instead of merely attaching me to it they have put me actually into the regiment as Captain and dated it back to the day I joined. Col. Winwood was very nice to-day about it and said he was very glad to have me, and also the Adjutant, Bill Balfour, said he thought it was far the best that it should have been done as it has been. So now I am actually one of the regiment and have the necessary prestige

which one's position as a squadron commander requires."

The following interesting letter is probably worth quoting at length :—

"*October 30th.*

"Great battles are going on these days and the Allies are doing well. . . ."

"*November 3rd.*

"We have not seen our transport for days. We are having a pretty strenuous time just now but the weather is not bad, which is a good thing. We had a big show at the place I told you about (Messines). My squadron and another were holding one end of the town. They made a big attack after days of shelling. It began at dawn, they having turned some of the Indian troops out of the trenches who were in front of the town during the night. On they came and got within a few yards of our people. In some places they were on one side of a railway embankment and our people on the other. We were hard at it and eventually at one point we got them on the hop, and they had a bad time as we got at them with maxims and rifles.

"I had only just been back to report that we were driving them back when I got word that we were to fall back, as on our left they had pressed our line in. There had been a very strong attack there. It was very disappointing, as we were doing well on our side. We fell back, holding the town street by street. In the evening we re-occupied our side of the town and an attempt was made by some fresh troops to get round the flanks. But we had nothing like sufficient troops to do this as the Germans had pushed forward their whole line at this point. We held on to the side of the town we had fallen back to and there we were, Germans in one part and we in the other. We put up barricades across the street and they pushed a gun up to within a couple of hundred yards down the street and fired away at the barricade and adjoining houses, fairly bringing the place about our ears.

"My squadron was there until midnight, when we were relieved by other troops who held on until next day, but obviously it was only a question of time before we should have to evacuate it. If only we had been strong enough on the left to have held on we should have repulsed them. But once the left had to fall back we on the right were done, as they

would have cut us off. Of course this is quite a small affair from the point of view of the whole show, and the falling back a kilometre at one point is of no consequence, but naturally we hated having to go when at our actual front we had driven them back. Our regiment did well and there were many brave things done that day. We had a good many casualties. Poor Captain Whitchurch was killed. He was a very good and brave officer, Wiley wounded; Collier Johnson bruised by a wall falling upon him, but he will be back, I hope, in a few days. At the moment, however, I have not a single officer in the squadron, so it is a bit of an anxious time. There is no doubt, however, that the Germans had far the worst of it. My squadron alone must have accounted for one or two hundred. I thought I would tell you about it, as you know just how I am feeling. I am very fit, and much looking forward to getting a wee bit of rest."

Then on November 4th.

"We are having a rest! What do you think of that? They marched us back to a place where we could have a few hours rest. It is topping. I had a bath in a tub this morning

and a change of clothes. I had not even had my boots off for a week."

So much has been written about the war that I think it quite unnecessary to enter any further into the details of the fighting about this time. The following Special Order from the General Commanding the 1st Cavalry Division speaks for itself :—

"General Officer Commanding desires to express to all units of the 1st Cavalry Division his appreciation of the good work they have performed during the past week in maintaining their defence of the . . . position, in spite of severe casualties, which, however, have not been in vain. But for their stubborn defence this position would not have been retained pending the arrival of reinforcements. G.O.C. Cavalry Corps has expressed his satisfaction at the work of the 1st Cavalry Division and desires this to be communicated to all ranks."

For the 1st Cavalry Brigade the days ensuing were spent as part of the mobile Reserve to the British army during the first Battle of Ypres, sometimes acting as infantry, holding part of that thin khaki line, which will

surely be as immortal as the thin red line of Balaclava; sometimes in reserve when one squadron in the regiment was always saddled up. The cavalry took their full share in opposing the German attempt to strike a dramatic blow by annihilating the British army, and proved that, as they had shown themselves superior to the German cavalry, they were, also, superior to their infantry.

This great battle ended on the 12th of November; Sir Douglas Haig thus described it in a General Order circulated on that day, "It is doubtful whether the annals of the British army contain any finer record than this." Never has a general's praise been more justly earned. Time merely removes doubt which might have existed at the moment of writing that order, and the judgment of history will probably be that the first battle of Ypres was a greater victory and more decisive than Waterloo itself. This great battle ended, there ensued a period of comparative quiescence; new men took the place of the sorely tired troops, and Charles and his regiment had, for the first time since landing in France, something like a rest. I am told he busied himself in looking after his men, and in taking part in their games and doing all that a good

officer would do for the men. He came home for a ninety-eight hour leave on November 24th. He returned with a couple of greyhounds given by a friend in Norfolk. He was much disgusted when coursing and hunting—(a pack of beagles had been somehow got together) was stopped. I suppose even our French allies did not yet realise how much a part of his life sport is to an Englishman. It seemed to them that coursing, etc., showed that the English were not taking the war seriously enough, and so the greyhounds had to go. It was a pity, for a little sport would have done no harm to our officers. Wellington knew this well enough when he took out a pack of hounds to the Peninsular.

After the disappointment of the Neuve Chapelle attack, when the cavalry had been saddled up in the hope of a general advance, April saw Charles and his regiment back in the Ypres sector.

In the great war battles did not last a few hours as in the Napoleonic campaigns, or a few days as in the war of 1870, or the Russian and Japanese war, but for several weeks. Thus the second battle of Ypres may be said to have begun about the end of March and it did not end till May 17th. It was rendered

memorable in that it was during this battle on April 22nd that the first use was made of "gas." Fortunately for them the 1st Cavalry Brigade were in reserve on that day. They were sent forward to hold the line soon after, and on March the 13th, when they were holding the sector of the Ypres-Roulers railway, at 4.30 p.m. began what Sir Herbert Plumer has described as "the heaviest bombardment yet experienced." It was raining in torrents to add to the misery of the heroic troops. The following letter describes the effect of this momentous day so far as it concerned the 5th Dragoon Guards. But before printing it there is one pleasant incident, worthy of record, which I think shows the sort of commander Charles was. There was a trooper in his squadron by name Grimes. Charles told me he was the bravest man he had ever met, he had distinguished himself on several occasions and he had been awarded the D.C.M. A week or two before the 13th, Charles had noticed he was not wearing his ribbon, and asking the reason, he learnt that Grimes did not possess it, so he wrote home for some D.C.M. ribbon. Strangely and opportunely enough, the mail was delivered while the bombardment was at its height of intensity,

and among Charles' letters was one containing the ribbon. Charles thought this a good opportunity for encouraging the men, and calling a few together he pinned the ribbon on Grimes' tunic; he had not left this gallant fellow more than a few minutes when news was brought that he had just been killed. "I was so glad," Charles said, "that he had had his little triumph before his end came." Here is the letter.

"I am not at all bad, a very trifling wound in the muscle of my left shoulder caused by a shell. When I tell you I was hit on the 13th and did not go sick until the 15th you will know I am not bad.

"I have probably a small bit of shell in the muscle, and if so it will have to be taken out, in which case I may be a week or two in getting right, but if there is nothing left in it will only be a few days.

"But it is with a heavy heart that I write, as we have lost nearly half the regiment who were with us in the trenches. Poor Denny and Wilson were killed, Carrington Wallace, Nettlefold, Dunbar, the Colonel and myself all hit. They bombarded us for eleven hours on end, beginning at daybreak. The most violent and prolonged bombard-

ment I have ever seen or heard of with big guns. They fairly blew us out of our trenches.

" If only they had attacked us it would have been quite different, we naturally expected, when the bombardment began, that it would be followed up by an attack, and this is what we longed for, we should have fought then to the last man. Never did I see the poor lads in greater form, all saying the same thing, " only wait till they attack."

" We had barely 120 men left out of over 240 that night, yet we had to find sixty to stay on for another twenty-four hours. I had to take charge of them. We had been at it eight nights and everybody was wet to the skin, the majority were without coats. It was a strenuous time that last twenty-four hours as all were fairly done up, and I had to keep on the go all I could to keep their hearts up. When we were relieved the next night about 11 p.m. we had an eight mile march and got back to billets at 4.30 the following morning.

" Our doctor got me to go to the dressing-station the next day and they decided I had better ' go sick.' I did not want to leave those good lads, they had been so nice to me the day before, but our Brigade Major told me privately that they would not be able

to do anything more with us just at present, so I have come away feeling better about it.

"It is all part of the mighty war, and in spite of all the loss the line is all right."

Truly here is a manly letter. Its silences are more eloquent than its descriptions. Charles was hit about midday on the 13th but he made so light of it that the majority in the regiment did not know he was touched, One Sergeant, who was wounded and invalided to England, expressed his surprise at hearing Charles was hit, he said, "I was about the last to be wounded and I know the Captain was not hit before I was." The wound proved to be much more serious than Charles thought, and he was sent to England. He suffered great pain and had to undergo several operations, and in the end not much could be done for him, his left shoulder was permanently disabled, he never was able to use it again.

So Charles' fighting days in France came to an end, he was deeply mortified, and for months he underwent treatment at Harrogate and at the Alderhey Hospital, Liverpool, in the hope of recovering the full use of his arm. The agonies he endured none will know, but his chief grief was the thought that he would

not again join, in active service, the regiment which had received him so cordially, and to which he was devotedly attached. His services were recognised by the authorities, and he was mentioned in Lord French's despatches, and he was given his Brevet majority in the regiment.

The following letter, written by his Colonel a year later, after the events described in the next chapter, speaks for itself:—

"*March 28th*, 1916.

"DEAR MRS BLACKBURNE,—Very many thanks for sending me the story" (this was an account of the Irish Rebellion written by Charles), "and General Lowe's report. . . . I am so glad that Charles has had a chance of showing his true worth again, I certainly never wish to have a better officer than him, as I do not think they exist. What do you think about his poor arm? That is really the hardest luck of all for him. Yours sincerely,

"W. B. WINWOOD."

CHAPTER X

IRELAND AND THE END, 1915–1918

Charles, as I have stated in the last chapter, never recovered from his wound. The skilled physicians and surgeons under whom he was placed tried every method of treatment, all was in vain, and little hope was held out to him that he would ever have the use of his left shoulder. He spent some months in various hospitals, and then went to his home at Tyddyn. He could not, however, rest inactive while the war was going on, he chafed at his enforced retirement, and he cast about in many directions for some piece of work which he could do to serve the country.

It so happened that General Lowe met Bee, quite by chance, at Chester Station at the end of the year 1915. His enquiries about Charles elicited the fact that he was greatly perturbed at not being able to do anything. General Lowe suggested that he should apply to the War Office for Charles to be appointed to his staff. (General Lowe was then in

command of the 7th Reserve Cavalry Brigade, stationed at the Curragh). Charles hailed this suggestion with delight, and early in 1916 he proceeded to Ireland as a staff officer. Of the work which ensued there is nothing worthy of record, I think, until the Irish Rebellion broke out. Charles was very happy to be with his old friend again and he quickly adapted himself to his new work, above all, he was once more at ease in his mind, for he was at least doing something to help on the war.

Into the details of the Irish Rebellion, 1916, I need not go, nor need I express any opinion about the political situation in that distracted and distracting country. Charles was a soldier, and he had to do as he was told.

It was quite clear from the first that the military must restore order and regular government to Ireland. In doing this Charles had no small part.

On Easter Monday he was at the Fairyhouse Races. Early in the evening news of the rebellion reached him, and he motored to the Curragh with all speed. When he got there he found that Col. Portal and a mobile column had been despatched to Dublin, and he continued to send reinforcements after him.

It was not till late at night that General Lowe knew that the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief was not in Ireland. As soon as he knew this he proceeded to Dublin, Charles going with him as his principal staff officer. They arrived at 4.30 a.m. on the 25th April. A strenuous time ensued. The General and Charles were working quite alone, they had no staff, all orders had to be actually written out by Charles, and operations had to be directed at the same time. General Lowe has told me how assiduous he was in his work, and withal how cheerful. He had no rest, night or day, for three or four days, and during all this time he remained perfectly clear in his head, and unflagging in the discharge of his duties. The General speaks of "his excellent staff work, untiring energy and ready initiative," as being invaluable to him. And in a letter written to a friend he says, "Charles has been simply splendid, I fully realise my good luck in having him as my principal staff officer. I knew he was good, but never how good until now."

It would not be wise to describe the measures taken to bring the rebellion to an end, it is enough to say that when the Commander-in-Chief arrived on the scene, which he did with

surprising rapidity, he fully approved of all that had been done. I print later on a few words written by him which will show that he gave Charles full credit for his share in the skilful disposition of troops, and the other operations which proved to be so brilliantly successful.

In the course of a few hours there was nearly a division of troops in and around Dublin.

One of Charles' chief anxieties was to save the lives of the peaceful citizens. In many parts of Dublin, notably in the Sackville Street area, fires were raging, the fire brigades did their utmost to cope with them, but they had often to retire under the fire of "the fanatics," as Charles calls them. The whole of the night prior to the surrender he had to sit in his office listening to all kinds of heartrendering appeals for help over the telephone. To all he replied that they must make a big white flag and come boldly out of their houses towards our pickets. Many did this and so undoubtedly saved their lives.

Amid the tragedies of the fighting in the streets of Dublin there were some humorous incidents which, indeed but for the courageousness and bravery of Charles, might have turned into tragedy, as the following incident will

show. A mysterious light was seen to be issuing from the top storey of a house in one of Dublin's main streets. It appeared that messages were being signalled by means of it. It was apparently, therefore, a stronghold of the rebels, and to all appearances shots were fired either from that house or from those in its vicinity. A field gun was brought to bear upon the house and orders were given for it to be shelled.

Charles had some kind of a premonition that it was not, however, that which it seemed to be, and he asked permission to make inquiries. This he received, and together with a Sergeant, an equally courageous man, he proceeded down the street to the house in question. He knocked on the door, but as it was not opened he and the Sergeant burst it in and made their way into the house, revolvers in hand. Silence greeted them on the lower floors. They proceeded upstairs, and entering the room from which the mysterious "signals" had proceeded, they found three elderly ladies in a state of considerable agitation. These were "the rebels." Passing nervously backwards and forwards in their room between the light and the window was the cause of the signals which

had been noticed. With apologies and reassurances to the startled ladies, Charles and his companion left the house. If they ever see this memoir, which I take it is most unlikely, they will know that they owe their lives to dear old Charles' coolness and bravery.

General Lowe tells me that Charles on one occasion showed his courage by a singularly characteristic action. Headquarters was under constant rifle fire and several casualties had occurred. The shots seemed to come from a row of houses in the vicinity, and an armoured car was ordered out to clear them. (The car consisted of a boiler, pierced for machine guns, and lashed on one of Messrs Guinness and Co.'s motor lorries). While waiting for the car to come round, Charles slipped out and went with a Sergeant through the houses and found them empty. He returned and reported the fact, much to the surprise of the General.

This was not a piece of foolhardiness or fire-eating. Charles had formed the opinion that the shots did *not* come from the suspected houses, and his action shows how, in this case, as consistently through life, his judgment was correct, and he, for his part, was willing to "back" his own opinion.

The rebellion in Dublin is not a pleasant

theme, and I will not enlarge upon it. Charles hated the duty, which he was, of course, obliged to fulfil; indeed the British army, unlike some of the foreign armies, has always especially loathed the duty of putting down riots and rebellions. It was a clear duty however, and Charles did it thoroughly—as always.

General Sir L. B. Friend writes as follows to Lieut.-Col. Sir A. Leetham, C.M.G. (Bee's uncle):—

"DUBLIN,

"*27th March* 1916.

"Blackburne is really first class, I think I would choose him first of any officer I know for staff officer, if I had a serious job to do. He is very capable, cool, decided, and thoroughly reliable and tactful withal. I cannot sufficiently express what I think of him. Yours always,

"L. B. FRIEND."

The rebellion having been put down, General Lowe was placed in command of mobile columns which proceeded throughout Ireland to deal with any further signs of rebellion in the country; Charles stayed in

Dublin and was placed on Sir J. Maxwell's staff, with the rank of G.S.O., 2nd Grade. He got a thorough insight into staff work under his immediate Chief, Brig.-General C. Hutchison, the chief of staff, Irish Command.

The good, if distasteful, work he had done was recognised, and at the New Year's honours 1917 he was raised to the rank of Brevet Lieut.-Colonel. Of the period which ensued I could write at great length if space would permit. He had plenty of work to do and he did it with all his might, but if I were to enter into the details of it I should be obliged to describe military dispositions and embark upon political questions, and neither of these would aid me in my sole purpose, which is to try to describe my brother's character and life. I can turn, with greater pleasure and profit, away from the vexed problem of Ireland, to the story of Charles' friendships and non-professional pursuits.

Before leaving the subject of the rebellion, however, I should like to say that Charles had the greatest pity for the wild and extravagant enthusiasts who led so many of their countrymen into so much misery. He was never, however rigorously he did his plain duty, one of those who scoffed at these

rebels. He never lost his sense of justice or his kindliness of nature; he had, I need not say it, no sympathy with the objects of the rebels, but for the rebels themselves—as deluded and unbalanced fanatics—he had a most sincere pity. This made his work distasteful to him, and he often used to say how much he wanted to get to France and fight Germans instead of dealing with members of the British Empire. And it was this wish which led him to desire to go through the Senior Staff Course at Cambridge, in order to qualify himself for such employment, a desire which, alas, led to such tragic consequences for him.

Charles' new post necessitated his living in Dublin, and he established himself in Kildare Street, near to the Kildare Street Club, of which he was a member. There during the years 1916, 17, 18, he made many friends. I had no opportunity of visiting him during these years, and so I asked some of those who knew him best to write me a few notes descriptive of this period of his life. These I will print just as I have received them.

(Robert Percy O'Conner La Touche, Esq.)
"Harristown,
"Brannockstown,
"Co. Kildare.

"Colonel Charles Blackburne, when he joined Kildare Street Club, at once aroused the sympathy of the members owing to his disablement from serious wounds, but in a very short time, by the charm of Col. Blackburne's personality, this sympathy was supplemented by the warmest feelings of affection and regard, and during the too short time he continued to be a member of the club his popularity could not have been excelled.

"Charles Blackburne was a good bridge player and an excellent raconteur, and these two qualities helped to make his genial society much appreciated. Blackburne, however, could not be properly described as a 'club' man, for he was one who took his greatest delight in out-of-door pursuits and the sports of the field. He was a first-rate shot, and even when his left arm was rendered practically useless and he was forced to have his guns reconstructed, he continued to shoot with great quickness and accuracy. He was much interested in agriculture, and especially in

light horse-breeding, on the subject of which he wrote an able memorandum, containing many suggestions which have been, or will be, adopted by the Royal Dublin Society for the improvement of the breed of half-bred horses in Ireland.

"Percy La Touche."

(The Rt. Hon. F. S. Wrench, P.C., etc.)

"Irish Land Commission.

"In all the many years of my membership of the Kildare Street Club, and since I joined the Land Commission in 1887, I have been almost a daily attendant there. I remember no one who made such an immediate impression and became such a general favourite among the best men worth knowing, as Charlie Blackburne. He was simply radiant with the milk of human kindness, and a more delightful companion I never met. One could not but feel the better for being in his presence, and at the same time he was so wise in council and keen in perception, that there was no subject on which it was not worth while seeking his opinion and advice, and many is the private talk I had with him to my great advantage in these troublous times.

"It was only on the Tuesday evening before his death that we were nearly two hours together in the club having a thorough discussion of his horse-breeding scheme, of which I formed a very high opinion, and some of the principles of which appear to have been adopted in the scheme of demobilization of army horses.

"I shall never forget or cease to mourn his bright presence.

"FREDERICK WRENCH."

(The Marquis of Headfort.)

"HEADFORT HOUSE,

"KELLS.

"My first meeting with Charlie Blackburne was when he was discussing a point with another staff officer at Head-quarters. I was struck at once with his extraordinary power of grasping a point. We met afterwards at lunch and became firm friends from that moment, at least I should say more than friends, for we became like two brothers; I always consulted Charlie in everything and told him everything. I never met a man who inspired

more confidence and whose advice was so sound, so straight and so high-minded as his. He made many friends in the club, and many turned to him for advice. Charles and I made two expeditions to Yorkshire to shoot grouse. On the first occasion we travelled together, and in those days when travelling was tedious and slow, his cheeriness made the journey pass very quickly. He had always shot from his left shoulder which was fortunate as he had not the full use of his left arm. He was obliged, therefore, to have a special contrivance made which necessitated running two steel wires to a second trigger-guard near to the butt of the gun. He had the greatest enjoyment in getting this done by a gunsmith, and many a day he and I used to call in and watch the progress of the gunsmith's work. It, however, was not very successful, though he shot very well with it, but he had not a sufficient grip and consequently his face and fingers suffered from the kick of the gun. On our first visit, the second day, he had the misfortune to break his bad arm through his pony putting his foot through a rotten bridge. The accident took half the pleasure away from our party and every one felt his departure on account of it. His pluck and

cheeriness were remarkable and only tended to convince every one, if such were necessary, of his marvellous powers of endurance and his utter unselfishness. The second year he took no chances, and whenever there was a boggy place to cross he got off his pony, much to my gratification. He shot marvellously. Every one in the party appreciated his cheery, almost boyish, enjoyment of the sport. On the first occasion I fear Charles suffered from the snores of the gentleman who shared his room, the shooting-lodge was small. After he returned from his second visit to Yorkshire with me he decided on an alteration to his gun, and we went together to the same gunsmith who suggested a little short stock. This was made and proved a great success, for he came to me on one of his visits, which, alas, were to my mind far too few, to try it at some clay pigeons, the result was so satisfactory that he promised me he would come to shoot on his return from the Cambridge Course. This, alas, was not to be. His glorious death was a terrible blow to me, and I shall never cease to lament the loss of so true and good a friend. I never met a man like him and shall never find a friend like him. It is only once in a lifetime one comes

across a man like him, and THANK GOD I FOUND HIM.

"HEADFORT.

"*March 12th*, 1919."

(H. Bland, Esq.)

"BLANDFORT,

"ABBEY LEIX.

"The first time that I saw Charles Blackburne was in the Kildare Street Club. He was advancing—with that quick, alert walk which was peculiar to him, and his wounded arm stuck out akimbo—to the lunch table.

"I noticed him choosing with care whether he would have hashed mutton or cold chicken, with that little wrinkle or frown in his forehead which I afterwards often saw when he was discussing affairs of state with one or another in authority.

"Of course I asked his name as he seemed to me to have a definite personality. Soon after, I made his acquaintance playing bridge, and then constantly met him at my own house, his home, and other people's houses.

"He told us more realistic stories from Mons than any one else. So many of our heroes were as difficult to open out as an oyster shell.

"He must have been, before his shoulder was wounded, an excellent shot. With a fitted gun I saw him shoot quite a number of snipe.

"The story of how he died, trying with his crippled arm to save his children, is peculiarly indicative of his character.

"Having survived 1914-1915, to be killed with one of the last submarine efforts of the war, is one of the saddest episodes that one has come across.

"HUM BLAND."

I think, with the exception of the reference to the horse-breeding scheme, the above notes carry with them their own explanation. At the end of this memoir I have printed the scheme, which I am glad to know has been well received. I must refer, however, to the accident Lord Headfort speaks of, when shooting in Yorkshire, for the incident is indicative of Charles' character. He was the guest of Major Francis Willey.

He was riding from one butt to another and had to cross a moorland bridge, one of those ricketty affairs consisting of a few planks with some turf thrown on them, his pony put his foot through a rotten place and over

they went, Charles falling upon his stiff arm with great force. The arm broke in the shoulder joint and Charles was in very great pain. He managed to conceal the fact, however, and prevailed upon the party to carry on without him, his success in concealing the nature of the injury he had received is to be seen in the following remark by one of the beaters, as the party moved off. "It's a good thing, sir, you have not hurt yourself." Charles told me of this incident with a grim smile, and added a forcible description of the agony he was enduring.

But he was always like that, very thoughtful for other people. I happened to be staying at Tyddyn and got a wire to say he was arriving that night, and as he drove up to the door I could see he was in great pain, yet his chief anxiety was to make light of it. He had travelled back from Yorkshire to Liverpool, and had proceeded to the Alderhay Hospital (he would not allow the local doctor in Yorkshire to set his arm), for he was anxious that no one but Sir R. Jones, under whose skilled treatment he had been, or his most able colleague, Dr Armour, should deal with his injury. At Liverpool Dr Armour set the arm and wished him to stay in a nursing home

there, but Charles knew Bee would be anxious, and also he hated being in hospital, so he returned to his home. A day or so afterwards I drove with him to Liverpool and he went to Alderhay Hospital. He was greatly interested in his "case," and it was most amusing to see him discussing with the doctors the X-ray photos of the injured limb, and when it was decided to reset the shoulder he refused to have an anæsthetic, but endured the great pain, so that he might see for himself what was being done, for he was anxious to have it set in a new position. I suppose the old spirit of enquiry, about which I wrote in the first chapter of this memoir, awoke within him, "the boy is father to the man," and the boy who could uproot a second tooth with button-hook and pen-holder, was father to the man who could endure to lie on an operating table while the painful business of resetting a broken joint was going forward. He even hoped that this injury would prove to be a blessing in disguise and that he would recover the partial use of his shoulder, but this was not to be, the broken arm mended all right, but it was as rigidly stiff as before.

What a handicap this stiff shoulder was to him, and how helpless it made him, was

scarcely realised by those who were constantly in his company, he seldom or ever complained about it. The following incident will show, however, under what a disability he laboured.

During the winter of 1917 there was a black frost in Dublin. Charles came out of his house —some thirty yards or so from the Kildare Street Club—with the intention of going there. The pavement and road were very slippery and he found himself helpless; a fall would mean another broken arm, and there he stood, looking for assistance. It happened that a lady with some little children in a governess cart was driving by, and she, seeing a tall staff officer with his arm in a sling looking about for help, asked if she could assist him, "yes," said Charles, "if you will kindly drive me." "Where to?" said the lady. "There," said Charles, pointing to the club which was just across the road. I think this incident will show how helpless, in some respects, his stiff arm made him, and it will certainly add to their admiration of him by those who knew Charles intimately, for one never gathered, from his ordinary manner or talk, that he was under this perpetual inconvenience and occasional serious disability.

When it became clear that his appointment

would be a long one (I do not think I have yet stated that he had been raised to the rank of G.S.O., 1st Grade, on the Head-quarter Staff, Irish Command), and indeed, that a military career was in certain prospect for him; he decided to sell his place in N. Wales and bring Bee and the children to Dublin.

Tyddyn was sold later on: but in January 1918 Bee and the children came to Ireland. They lived at Bellville, Phœnix Park for some months, and afterwards moved to 21 Hatch Street. Charles was never so happy as when entertaining his friends, and there were a host of friends too numerous to mention. Major W. E. D. Balfour, who had been adjutant to the 5th Dragoon Guards when Charles joined the regiment, had now come to Ireland with his wife; the Balfours, together with the members of the Head-quarter Staff, and many others, constituted a circle of friends in whose society Charles and Bee found very great pleasure. But of all this I need not write. If my tale, now drawing near to its tragic close, has not been very grievously at fault, it must be clear that Charles was a universal favourite. His absolute naturalness, his entire absence of affectation and desire to "pose," his glorious gifts as a raconteur, as a sportsman, as an

earnest-minded and true-hearted friend, endeared him to all who knew him. Life to him was a thing to be lived with a zest; he was never "bored" with it, he flung himself, as Lord Headfort says, "almost boyishly" into every project of entertainment; he knew how to enjoy life, was never "blasé" but always found something that was really worth while to do—withal, none who knew him could doubt that he never viewed life merely as a thing to be laughed at or muddled through. He never obtruded the serious into the gay things of life. Yet one always felt that he had a full knowledge of the fact that "Life is not a jest!" Enjoyment to him was relaxation and recreation. Perhaps it was because of this appreciation on his part that he was able to turn from grave to gay so happily, and, refreshed by gaiety, he could turn back again from gay to grave. For he always viewed his work, of whatever kind it was, as his life's business, he enjoyed his work, he did not grudge the time he gave to it, if he had had the choice, I am quite sure he never would have accepted a life in which all was pleasure and no work.

No, Charles worked hard and he played hard. He enjoyed his work and he enjoyed his play.

AUDREY AND PETER

From a Water-colour by Miss K. Mayer

His life was a nicely balanced life in this respect, not many men have worked harder than he has done, and not many have had more opportunities for healthful enjoyment.

During the year 1918 Charles became somewhat anxious about his future. The death of his friend and partner, Milner Stewart Brown, had greatly distressed him, and through this and because of the war his business in Liverpool had suffered so greatly that he felt he must cut his losses there. Tyddyn was sold. He was wishful to qualify himself for staff work with a view to a permanent appointment after the war, for his disabled shoulder made regimental duties impossible. So he decided to go through a senior staff course at Cambridge with this end in view. On October 10th, Charles, Bee, and the children embarked on the "*R.M.S. Leinster*," and at 9.40 a.m. a German submarine fired two torpedoes into the ship. There were 780 on board of whom 587 were lost, among them Charles and his two children. The last seen of him was in the heavy sea, swimming as best he could with his little girl Audrey on his back. I do not think the struggle can have been a long one, his face showed no sign of it.

So Charles! you passed through The Great Adventure just as you had passed through so many others, you had often looked death in the face, without flinching, and you went "through the waters" just as you had lived your whole beautiful, unselfish life.

You had a child in either hand as you went through The Valley of the Shadow, and, I doubt it not, you called to them bravely, cheerily, as they, with you, passed into The Unknown.

I bid you farewell, my brother and dearest friend; I cannot say "sleep well," for, in that Spirit World where you are, you cannot be asleep, death cannot have so changed your nature that you have ceased to be your own active, strenuous, cheerful self: you are, I cannot doubt it, still pushing on with right good will, still doing, still achieving. I do confess, as I end this story of your life, that my eyes fill with tears, and my heart grows sore indeed; the world is, by very much, a poorer, duller place for your passing; and it must needs seem long ere we shall meet again. But I know you would not wish those who love you to repine, or, as you would say, "make heavy weather of it," and so, though the tears will not go away, they do

become a magic pool; in it I see you again, as I have often seen you, happy, gallant, debonair, as of old, both boy and man, so good a sight you were, old Charles! with your kind, kind, eyes and your steadfastness; and in it too I see something of the future—mistily moving—I see you waiting beyond The River for those you love so dearly, and I believe when we, one by one, follow you through The Great Adventure, you will greet us cheerily on the other side.

EPILOGUE

CHARLES' body was recovered and also that of "Peter"; Audrey's was never recovered. The funeral service was held on October 14th in the Chapel of the Royal Hospital, the residence of the Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Command. The Primate of all Ireland took the service, and with every token of affection and regard the bodies of Charles and his little boy were laid to rest. The choir of St Patrick's Cathedral sang the musical part of the service, which was attended by the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Frederick Shaw, K.C.B., etc.), the Head-quarter's Staff and a host of friends. There were masses of flowers, among them a wreath from his own personal staff with the inscription, "To our Beloved Colonel." The interment was in the Royal Hospital cemetery which had not been used for many years, but was specially opened for this purpose by command of the Viceroy and the G.O.C. There, then, lie all that is mortal of dear Charles; some loving friends see that

the grave is cared for. On the cross surmounting the grave are the words :

"When thou passest through the waters
I will be with thee."

In *The Times* of October 18th, 1918, the following appeared :—

"Our Dublin correspondent telegraphs :

"Canon Pym, Rector of Christ Church, Kingstown, sends the following statement to *The Irish Times* :

"'On Saturday afternoon last there was a bank of cloud on the horizon, and against a clear sky above it there appeared for some moments the form of a great white cross of absolutely perfect shape. It was seen by at least four members of my own household, not all of them together, or from the same place, as well as by other people. One of the witnesses described it to me that it had seemed to him first as if there were a great cloud figure with outstretched arms, which assumed the form of a cross, and as the sharpness of its outlines passed it seemed to be full of the faces of men and women. It was just, as it were, over the place where the disaster to the *Leinster* had happened.' Canon Pym

adds: 'one presumes to offer no explanation but it was certainly there, and at the least it was a symbol of surpassing comfort.'

"The correspondent adds: The phenomenon to which Canon Pym refers was seen by many residents on the Dublin coast, and has been a subject of general conversation in the city."

I am very anxious not to overload this Memoir with laudatory comments upon my brother's life and character. I trust I have not done this in the foregoing pages. I could have filled a book with such comments. I have selected those I have used as typical of very many. I here print a few more extracts from letters written after his death, they are taken from some hundreds which have been received.

An officer who served as private and N.C.O. in his squadron wrote:

"I can truthfully say that in the thirty months I served at the front in the war I never met a braver man, nor did I ever meet an officer more respected by his men."

Major-General Lowe, C.B., to whom several references have been made in this memoir, writes:

"I always looked upon him as my ideal type of a perfect man, physically and mentally."

Lord Loch, Chief of Staff, Irish Command, writes:

"Nobody could possibly work with him without knowing that he was a real, true and good man. I, of course, judged him from the military point of view, and I never hope to be associated with a better soldier. He gained the respect and friendship of every officer and man with whom he came in contact."

Sir John Maxwell, K.C.B., etc., his Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, writes:

"I had the highest opinion of him, and his loss is a great one for the army, where he had every prospect of a great career. He died, as he lived, a gallant English gentleman, with no thought of his own safety so long as others were in peril."

Lord French writes:

"I can't tell you in what esteem we all held our dear comrade, and what a terrible loss he has been to us all."

SUPPLY OF LIGHT HORSES

STATE AID FOR BREEDING

The only way to provide for an adequate supply of horses being available in the country in time of need is obviously to induce breeders to continue breeding. This being the case, Government assistance is necessary to render light horse-breeding more attractive than it is at the present time. There are two ways by which this can be done :

1. By paying better prices for army horses.
2. By subsidy to breeders.

The Government must pay better prices in future for army horses, and a definite announcement that this will be done should be made. But it will have to go further than this if material benefit is to result, for the number of horses required annually to make good the wastage in the army in peace time is small, and therefore the payment of higher prices, although it would help, would not in

itself be sufficient. Something on a bigger scale is required and therefore I recommend a system of subsidy. I suggest two alternative ways of doing this :

1. Breeders should be invited to offer their mares for inspection with a view to having them registered if considered suitable for breeding. The owners of these mares would enter into an undertaking to have them mated each year with an approved stallion, and in return the Government would pay a subsidy of, say, £10 for each foal bred. This procedure would give the Government the same control over the selection and mating of the mares as if it owned its own studs, and at a fraction of the cost ; further than that, instead of interfering with private enterprise it would be stimulating it.

2. The other system of subsidy would have as its object : Compensation for an owner who, though he had done his best to breed a good horse, had bred a "misfit." It would be carried out as follows : Mares would be registered as in the preceding scheme and the progeny would be inspected at $3\frac{1}{2}$ years old, provided the owner wished to produce

it for inspection. The Government would then do one of two things :

(*a*) Either undertake to buy the animal for the army when it became five years old for, say, £65, provided it was produced in good condition, or

(*b*) If the animal was not a good one, or if the Government did not wish to undertake to buy it in accordance with (*a*), a sum of, say, £15 would be paid to the owner by way of compensation.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the owner need not produce his animal for inspection unless he wished to do so. This is necessary so that if an exceptionally good animal is bred the owner is perfectly free to keep it for private sale. Of course if he does not produce it for inspection at $3\frac{1}{2}$ years old the Government is absolved from all responsibility with regard to it.

(At first sight it may appear a strange proposal to suggest paying subsidies for bad horses, but subsidy is not quite the correct word. It is compensation, not subsidy, that is actually being paid

to a man who, through no fault of his own, has bred a "misfit." It must not be forgotten that the Government is responsible for the selection of the parents.)

This latter proposal requires more carrying out than the first one, but, with a limited sum to spend, larger results would be obtained by it than by the first system. In any case, neither scheme calls for a large amount of administrative detail.

No scheme of Government studs, as a means of supplying an adequate supply of horses for the army *in time of war*, is feasible for the following reasons:

1. If they are to be of any practical value they must be capable of supplying, and maintaining, the supply of horses *in time of war*, for there would practically be no private sources upon which to draw, and therefore the studs would have to carry such enormous stocks as to render the system impossible on anything like an economic basis.

If studs were kept merely to make good ordinary wastage, they would actually do harm to the horse-breeding industry, for such

a policy would withdraw the army buyers from the market and in consequence would still further reduce the present very restricted supply.

2. Horses kept together in large numbers never do well.

3. Risks of epidemics are increased by maintaining large studs.

4. The cost per horse to the nation would be far greater than by a policy of subsidy. Under the subsidy system the nation only pays for actual *production*, but with national studs there is not only the expense of production but also the expense of maintenance for every animal bred. (I know there is an idea that horses could be boarded out "meat for manners," but that seldom works satisfactorily and could not be relied upon as a general principle.)

I consider that the only way to ensure an adequate supply of horses for the army is by providing direct inducement to private enterprise to breed them, and as the purposes for which horses are normally used become less, the greater must be the subsidy paid by the Government.

I am confident that, pound for pound, far better results will be obtained from subsidy than from any system of Government studs, no matter however well they might be run.

C. H. Blackburne.

9th October 1918.

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